BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

TEMPLES AND LEGENDS OF MAHARASHTRA

M. S. Mate

GENERAL EDITORS

K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY

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आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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97

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By

M. S. MATE

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TEMPLES AND LEGENDS OF MAHARASHTRA

BY

M. S. MATE

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in Engligh 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2/50-.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting itself to the utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions that allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspirations which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books from other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, besides the movements of the Indian mind, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita*, by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who does not know it does not know the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas the climax of which is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone, the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI:
3rd October, 1951.

K. M. MUNSHI

PREFACE

This small book aims at presenting to the reader a picture of one of the important aspects of the culture of the Marathi people, and that aspect is the religious centres of the region. A good deal of material, historical and legendary, is available from both the medieval and modern times. A number of scholars have recently devoted attention to the various kshetras of the area. A bibliography is attached at the end of the book to indicate the work previously done and also as a guidance to anybody who might wish to undertake a detailed study. To all those students who have trekked the path before me and more especially to Prof. G.H. Khare who has pioneered large scale investigations in this field, I owe a great debt.

However, all this work is mainly devoted to individual kshetras, and it is mostly in Marathi. As such when the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, the sponsors of the Series, suggested that I undertake the task of preparing this work I welcomed the idea at once as it would enable me to present before the non-Marathi-speaking public a comprehensive account of one of the important aspects of the cultural life of the Marathi people. I thank the authorities of the Bhavan for giving me an opportunity of studying this problem, particularly Shri S. G. Tolat of the same Institute for the kind co-operation he has extended during the preparation of the book.

Lastly I owe my thanks to Prof. H. D. Sankalia, my teacher and Head of the Department of Archaeology, University of Poona, for his guidance and valuable suggestions while preparing the text.

POONA:
26th July 1961

M. S. MATE

CONTENTS

	Page
MORGAON-MORESHVAR (GANESH)	1
KOLHAPUR—MAHALAKSHMI	26
TULJAPUR—BHAVANI	53
GANAGAPUR—DATTATREYA	79
PEDHE—PARASHURAMA	102
BHIMASHANKAR—BHIMASHANKAR	122
TRYAMBAKESHVAR—TRYMBAK	140
KHANDOBA—JEJURI	162
PANDHARPUR—VITTHAL	188
GLOSSARY	221
BIBLIOGRAPHY	233

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Shri Mayureshvar, Morgaon
2. Ganesh Temple, Morgaon : Shikhar
3. Ganesh Temple, Morgaon : Entrance
4. Mahalakshmi Temple, Kolhapur : Mahadvara
5. Mahalakshmi Temple, Kolhapur : Mouldings and Walls
6. Mahalakshmi Temple, Kolhapur : General View
7. Mahalakshmi Temple, Kolhapur : Mouldings and Walls
8. Shri Mahalakshmi, Kolhapur
9. Shri Bhavani, Tuljapur
10. General View of the Temple, Tuljapur
11. Entrance to the Temple, Ganagapur
12. Shri Parashurama, Pedhe
13. Shri Tryambakeshvar, Tryambak
14. Tryambakeshvar Temple, Tryambak, General View
15. Fortifications and arcades around the Temple, Jejuri
16. Archways and Dipmalas on the Hill, Jejuri
17. Khandoba Temple, Jejuri: General View

18. The Khandoba, Pali: Shikhar

19. Pillared aisle around Khandoba Temple, Pali

20. The Samadhi of Pundalik, Pandharpur

21. Temples on the banks of the Bhima, Pandharpur

22. Shri Vitthal, Pandharpur

Courtesy: Shri S. R. Devale, Poona

Map showing important Kshetras of Maharashtra

MORGAON

MORESHVAR (GANESH)

GANESH is known as 'Mangal-murti'—the auspicious deity. It is a common custom to worship and pray this son of Shiva and Parvati when undertaking any important work or beginning any auspicious occassion like marriage or thread ceremony.

विद्यारंभे विवाहे च प्रवेशे निर्गमे तथा ।।
संग्रामे संकटे चैव विघ्नतस्य न जायते ।।
सर्वदा सर्व कार्येषु नास्ति तेषाममंगलम् ।
येषां हृदिस्थो भगवान् मंगलायतनम् हरिम् ।।

Formerly it was a prevalent tradition of affixing or carving the image of Ganesh on the lintel of the entrance of houses and for that reason it was most commonly known as *Ganeshpatti*. Today a picture of Ganesh is affixed at the same place, that is, in the centre of the lintel of the doorframe when a marriage or thread ceremony is to take place in one's house.

The Ganesh image is one of the many most curious features that Hindu mythology and iconography have conceived. With a plump body, a round belly, this god with an elephant head and trunk has selected the pretty little mouse as his vahana. The ankush, shankha and pasha are some of his ayudhas. However, most of the images from the important Ganesh kshetras are of a very crude nature, and are known as 'Swayambhu' or self-created. They do not have the elaborate carvings necessary to indicate the ayudhas.

Although practically every town and village of Maharashtra would have at least one temple of Ganesh,

the places most famous as centres of Ganesh worship are the *Ashtavinayaks.* The places are as narrated in the following verse.

स्वस्ति श्रीगणनायकं गजमुखं मोरेश्वरं सिद्धिदम् ।
बल्लाळं मुरूलं विनायकमहं चिंतामणिं थेवरम् ।
लेण्याद्रि गिरिजात्मजं सुवरदं विघ्नेश्वरं ओझरम् ।
ग्रमे रांजणसंस्थितो गणपति कुर्यात् सदा मंगलम् ।

It is a commonly held belief that if a pilgrim visits any of these ashtavinayaks he should visit the rest of the centres as well, if he has to receive the full benefit of his pilgrimage. There is the 'Siddhivinayak' at Siddhatek. Siddhatek is on the Bhima river and is approached from a small station, Boribel, on the Dhond-Sholapur section of the Central railway. Siddhatek is six miles from this station. The shrine is on a hillock and is a small temple said to have been built by Ahalyabai Holkar by the end of the eighteenth century. Various Maratha princes have given numerous donations and grants for the daily rituals of the temple. Pali in the Kolaba district has the 'Ballal-vinayak'. There was a controversy as to the original 'sthan' of this Ballal-vinayak, whether it was Tryam-bakeshvar or Nandgaon or Murud or Pali. During the Peshwa times it was ultimately decided that the original habitat was none else than Pali. This belief is common today also. Morobadada Phadnavis, the brother of the famous Nana Phadnavis caused to be crected the present temple of Ballal-Vinayak, while the sabhamandap that stands before it was constructed by one Ringe. Not far off from this Pali is another member of this ashtavinayak clan. This is the Varad-Vinayak at Mahd. This is a very small village and the temple is also small. At Ozar in the Junnar taluka is Vighneshwar the fourth of the ashta-vinayaks. This place is some six miles from Junnar. The temple is an unpretentious stone structure enclosed within a paved courtyard and walls. The whole vicinity is

typically clean and neat. Some three miles from Junnar in the surrounding hills is the Girijatmaka of Lenyadri. This Ganesh is housed in a rock-cut shrine. The temple resembles closely a Buddhist vihar and was cut probably some time during the eighth-ninth centuries. The hall is a large square some sixty feet long and equally broad. It has stone asanas all around. The image of Ganesh is cut in one of the walls. Ranjangaon on the Poona—Ahmadnagar road has the shrine of Ganesh known as Ganapati. The shrine is quite near the road and is a rather crude structure dating back to the Maratha period but built on the earlier Yadav style. The present image is said to be a substitute for the original one that had ten heads and twenty arms. The orignal image is supposed to be housed in a cell below the garbhagriha. This is one of the better known of the Ganesh kshetras. Then comes Theur, a place on the Mula-Mutha river and the nearest approach is from the Loni station, on the Poona-Dhond section. The temple is fairly large and built during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. This place was a favourite resort of Peshwa Madhavrao I and not far from the temple are ruins of the Peshwa's palace. The Ganesh at this kshetra is known as Chintamani. The last and most important is the Mayureshvar of Morgaon. This is described in some detail below. Chinchwad a place some ten miles from Poona is also a well known centre of Ganesh worship. But it it is not one of the ashtavinayaks and is not included here. But a brief sketch of Moraya Gosavi who was mainly responsible in making Chinchwad important would be found in the description of Morgaon.

Ganesh was the family deity of the Peshwas and they devoted a good deal of attention and money on the construction and renovation of the Ganesh shrines of the ashtavinayaks. As such although many of the above shrines existed in the pre-Peshwa period and although

mythological legends take the avataras back to far remote times, the temples as seen today do not anti-date the eighteenth century.

An account of a trip to Morgaon follows.

The bus rumbles on through a dusty road. The sun is getting hotter. The land around has very little of greenery. Vast stretches of dry, yellowish land meet the eyes as far as they go. The passes of the Diva hills and the towering hill of Jejuri are now far behind. Numerous culverts cross the road making the ride extremely bumpy. It would be hardly passable in the wet season. The distance from Poona is not more than forty miles, but now the sun has come right over the heads, indicating that it was nearly five hours since the bus has left Poona. On the distant horizon a small spire comes in view; but is lost sight of often as the bus has to stick to the ups and downs of the terrain. Eventually the vehicle grinds to a halt. The scence around is hardly inviting. Grey dust and heat dominate everything. The mud plastered houses add to this effect. The visitor rather unwillingly gets down. He can hardly reconcile this desultory exterior with the great fame of the kshetra that has attached him there. And this is his first encounter with Morgaon or Mayureshvar, the prime centre of the Ganesh cult, the foremost of the 'ashtavinayaks'.

भूमिस्वानंदभवनं मयूरेशमिति स्मृतम् ।
सर्वक्षेत्रमिति प्रोक्तं क्षेत्रराजमिति स्मृतम् ।।

Sure enough the external appearance is deceptive. The pilgrim proceeds through winding lanes to encounter a massive stone enclosure. Small cupolas of the North Indian style grace the corners while a giant tree spreads its green umbrella over the shrine structure. The temple has its main gate towards the north. In front of the gate stretches northwards the main thoroughfare and market of the village.

The entire architectural scheme is quite simple. It is built on a platform some fifteen feet in height. On the street level in front of the temple is a big cell housing a giant stone image of a mouse, the vahan of Ganesh. The mouse is seated on his hind legs, happily munching a *modak* held in the forelegs. A broad flight of steps leads to the first stage of the raised platform. Here is another cupola in which is an image of nandi. Nandi is the vahan of Shiva and as such its presence before Ganesh is not quite logical iconographically. However, there is a tale locally current that explains how the nandi came here. There is a famous shrine of Bhuleshvar near Yavat, some ten miles from Morgaon. The people from this Yavat had placed an order with a craftsman from some other village to carve an image of nandi to place it before the Shiva ling in that temple. On completion it was being transported to Bhuleshvar and the route passed through Morgaon. As soon as the cart in which the image was being carried came in front of this shrine, it broke down, dumping the image on the ground. All attempts to lift it were thwarted and ultimately the priests decided to chisle it down to a more manageable size. This brought forth a strong remonstrance from Nandi who warned one of the priests that he would not budge from his position as he wanted to be near Mayureshvar. A small structure was later on built to shelter it.

The main gate, a wide pointed arch surmounted by a nagarkhana opens on a spacious courtyard in the middle of which stands the shrine. Immediately inside the gateway are two dipmalas, one on each side. Next is the sabha-mandap, a spacious rectangular hall built in the typical Maratha style with cypress pillars and cusped arches. This was built by one Kurundwadkar. Adjoining this sabha-mandap towards the east is a small square room known as the shej-ghar or bed-room of the deity. After the sabha-

mandap is the mandap, a square stone structure. To its east is a wood and brick structure containing the shrine of Nagnabhairav. This Nagnabhairav is an important guardian spirit of this kshetra. He is the chief guardian in control of everything at this kshetra. He is the 'maya-kumara', a son created from 'maya' by Ganesh. His main temple is some three miles to the east of the Ganesh shrine, but he also stays here so as to be of constant service to his Lord. This Nagnabhairav is, according to local legend, capable of removing various ills, evil spirits and so on; of course a severe and regular 'seva' is necessary to achieve results.

The southernmost part of the entire complex is the garbhagriha. The present image is a giant one of the 'swayambhu' type, rather of crude craftsmanship. According to textual references, the Ganesh image has four arms, and three eyes. He holds the pasha and the amkusha in the upper arms while the lower right rest on the knee and the lower left holds a modak. On his left is Siddhi, on the right Buddhi. In front are the 'Mushaka' and the 'Mayur'. A tale told by the local elders states that the present image was established at this spot by the Pandavas, Shri Krishna and Vyasa when they had come to this kshetra for pilgrimage. Till that time an image established by Brahmadeva was worshipped, but to protect it for ever, the Pandavas under Vyasa's guidance built a strong cell around it and covered it with a copper sheet and then placed the present image for daily rituals.

The garbhagriha is octagonal on plan externally and is surmounted by a pyramidal shikhar in stucco. The spire consists of two rows of niches and three amalaka-like objects one over the other. The ornamentation of the shikhar consists of various stucco figures, graceful elephants supporting the minarets and mythological figures and deities in the niches.

The temple is surrounded by a large rectangular courtyard paved with stone and is typically clean. This is, in its turn enclosed within arched all around.

In addition to the chief object of worship, there are a number of subsidiary deities present in the same courtyard. In the sabhamandap is a Ganesh image and a pair of brass images of Lakshmi-Narayan, of obvious South Indian craftsmanship. The Ganesh image in this mandap is known as Ballal-Vinayak or Kapil. His presence at this place is connected with the struggle with Sindhu-daitya. Among the legions of this daitya there was one Shankasur. He himself was greatly powerful but had become more formidable because of his relationship with Kamalasur, the commander of the asur armies. This Kamalasur had been a recipient of a boon from the gods that none could kill him. With such a powerful person behind, there was little wonder that Shankhasur would create mischief. He stole all the Vidyas and hid himself beneath the seas. Deprived of their vidyas the gods, rishis and brahmins were greatly worried. The gods turned to Ganesh for relief who killed both the asurs and later on as Ballal Vinayak or Kapil restored all the vidyas and vedas to the devas and rishis; although one version has it that Shankhasur was slain by Vishnu and not Ganesh.

In the eight corners of the courtyard are eight images of Ganesh described by the Mudgal Purana. They are Vakratunda, Ballal, Heramba, Vighnesh, Bhalachandra, Chintamani, Siddhivinayak and Mahaganapati. This list, as would be evident, is different from that of the 'ashtavinayakas', although the number is the same.

According to the Mudgal Purana there are three habitats of cardinal importance of Ganesh, one in each Loka. Kailas is the habitat in the Swarga or paradise, the palace of Shesha in the Patal Loka and Mayurapuri on the Bhu

Loka—earth. The first or western gate of this kshetra is represented or guarded by Rati and Kama. It signifies 'Asat-Brahm'. The northern dwara is the second, signifying 'Sat-Brahm'. This is guarded by Mahi-Varaha, that is, earth and sun. The eastern gate leads to 'Vishnu-Brahm' and is guarded by Rama-Ramesh or Lashmi-Narayan. The southern one represents 'Shankar-Brahm' and its guardians are Uma-Mahesh. In the present temple, small images of these deities are seen in the central niches of the four enclosing walls of the courtyard. A yatra or pilgrimage of these dwaras, that is, the guardian deities of each of these, is considered to be one of the important rites that a yatrik is to perform. The first day of the first half of the month of Bhadrapad is an auspicious day on which this yatra should begin. The first to be visited and worshipped should be Rama-Ramesh of the eastern gate. Next day the southern dwara should be visited, on the third western and on the fourth day Mahi-Varaha or the northern dwara should be honoured. These dwaras are, according to some interpretations, symbolic of the four aspects or angas of life—Dharma (Vishnu), Artha (Shiva), Kama (Kama), and Moksha (Varaha). Thus a pilgrimage of the dwaras gives everything of each of the four angas of man's life to the yatrik. If a person could not spare four days for this dwara-yatra, he might use whatever time is at this disposal to complete the yatra. The Vitthal and Rakhumai images seen in a cell of the aisle are said to be placed there by the famous saint Tukaram when he visited this famous shrine. Similarly Swami Ramdas had also visited the shrine. As the tale goes, both these saints had achieved such power that whatever might be the image in a temple, it assumed the form of the 'aradhya-daivatas' of these two, that is, Vitthal and Rama. Similar powers were attributed to various devotees of Ganesh like Shri Chintamanimaharaj, who could change, temporarily of course. the Vithoba of Pandharpur

into a Ganesh image through his will power. A similar story is attributed to Swami Ramdas. When he visited Pandharpur, Vithoba assumed the form of Rama. Tukaram and Ramdas both hoped that similar examples of the power of their will power would be visible here. But this never happened as Ganesh was superior to any other deity. Tukaram had to satisfy himself with establishing the images of Vitthal and Rakhmai, while Ramdas, as the story goes, conceded defeat more gallantly and established a Ganesh image himself. But the Swami did not forget to place a Hanuman image also. The most popular arati or prayer of Ganesh, सुखकर्ता दुःखहर्ता emanated from the Swami's mouth on this very occasion.

The snana-vidhi in various tirths is also a feature in common with all the kshetras that is observed here. There are various accounts of the origin and importance of the several tirths. The number of tirths is great, the chief amongst them being Karha-Ganga or the river Karha. Its source is in the hills near Garada, a village some thirty miles to the west of Morgaon. This Karha-ganga is the 'Turiya' tirth, the ultimate, the last word in tirths capable of absolving sin. Although the river is very small, long stretches resembling a bigger streamlet, its sanctity is great. That is so because of the manner in which it arose. Long long ago, when Brahma undertook the creation of the Universe, he brought into existence 'Kama', the god of love, as an essential factor in the continuity of the Universe. But this Kama was so powerful that his very first victim was his own creator Brahma. And as ill-luck would have it, it was for his own daughter, Saraswati that Brahma became lustful. This desire destroyed all his great powers and he was unable to do anything. The repentant creator approached his colleagues, confessed his blunder and asked them to find a way out. They in their turn had grown anxious as the work of creation had

come to a standstill. Immediately the rishis and gods created numerous tirths, Shakti created Saraswati, Surya Yamuna, Vishnu Ganga and Shiva Narmada. Brahmadeva took bath in all of them. But his sin was so great that none of these tirths could do him any good. Once again the elders gathered together and decided to invite the Turiya tirth to wash off Brahma's sin. In response to the prayers of all these, the tirth appeared and its very 'darshan' relieved Brahma of all his burden of sins. Once again he was able to undertake the task of creation. He prayed the Turiya tirth to stay in his Kamandalu—water bowl, and it agreed to do so. Unknown to him, the tirth had already approached Mayuresh with a request that it be allowed to stay at or near Mayureshvar. The god had promised to do something in the matter. Soon an opportunity presented itself. Brahma went to visit the Ganesh shrine at Morgaon. He worshipped the various deities in the temple, completed the dwara-yatra and was circumambulating the Mayuresh image when inadvertantly he stumbled upon the Kamandalu. It jumped due to the shock and fell down some thirty miles off. Water spilled out of it and turned into a river. This was the Turiya tirth itself. Brahmadeva soon realised his mistake and tried to collect the water in his kamandalu, but Ganesh prevented him from doing so as the tirth wanted to stay near himself. And so this Karha came here. Next in importance to the Karha or Turiya tirth, is the Ganesh or Amkush tirth. Once the gods came for the worship of Mayureshvar, but could find no water where to take bath. This is an incident much before Karha-Ganga came into existence. Hence they prayed to Ganesh to show a way out. The god appeared and struck his amkush at a spot which immediately turned into a tirth. The Mudgal Purana mentions some more tirths, most of which are located in the Karha river. There is the Kapil tirth, the giver of knowledge; Vyasa tirth the destroyer of ignorance; Bhima tirth

the giver of strength and Rishi tirth the giver of true Dharma. The fifth is the Ganesh tirth. To the north Surya samadaya tirth, to the south Prakriti-purush tirth; then there are Siddhi-Buddhi, Lasha, Mushaka and so on, of which Skanda-Purana gives a great many legends.

Once there ruled a Chakrapani in a city named Gandaki. This king was brave, tolerant and always anxious about the welfare of his subjects. However, he was not happy as he had no issue. Hence he undertook along with his wife Ugra a great penance to please Surya. After some years the god appeared and promised to fulfil his desire for a son. In due course Ugra became pregnant, but as days passed the immense power—teja—of the embryo made it impossible for her to carry it in her womb. It was dislocated and fell in the 'sea', who assumed the form of a brahmin and looked after it. Later on when the embryo turned itself into a baby, the brahmin went to Chakrapani and gave him his son. As the boy was cared for by the sea he was named 'Sindhu'. Sindhu came of age and decided to undertake tapa. For a period of two thousand years he was standing erect on one leg to propitiate Surya. After that term Surya was so much pleased, he promised any boons that Sindhu might care to ask for. Sindhu wanted two things. He should be able to conquer all the three Lokas and should be able to have ambrosia always and forever. The first was given unconditionally, but about the latter Surya told him that he would be able to enjoy ambrosia so long as the Supreme God does not deprive him of its container. Once he does it, he would be dead. Even this was no mean achievement! His parents and friends were greatly pleased with him and his father decided to accept the Vanaprasthashram by seating Sindhu on the throne. The new king gathered around him several daredevils and launched on his long-cherished project of conquering the three Lokas. As so often happens, dharma,

knowledge, the learned elders were his first victims. The enjoyment of all sorts of material pleasures became the order of the day. Wrecking of the old social and religious order became his 'asuri' pastime. He was a great iconoclast, dared to break even the image of Morgaon and imprisoned all gods great and small.

This state of affairs could not be allowed to continue for long. And the great god Ganapati came in this world as Gunesh, the son of Shiva and Parvati in response to a prayer from the captive gods. This news was conveyed to Sindhu by his agents and then he devised all sorts of means to destroy the child. These attempts kept his parents always worried, and although Gunesh proved his supernatural powers on more than one occasion, they were not reassured. Some incidents took place in front of his mother or father. For example, once he played some mischief and Parvati ran after him to punish him. A demon named Kardam appeared on the scene and swallowed the young Gunesh. When Parvati came enquiring after him, the demon said he did not know. Even before his sentence was complete Gunesh jumped from his mouth and delivered a heavy blow on the head of the demon, who fell dead on the ground. But still he was a child and that too in constant danger, so Shiva and Parvati always guarded him very much. A more tough trial of strength soon occurred. Sindhu had already put in jail all the gods like Indra, Chandra, Varuna, Brahma, Vishnu etc, and now he dispatched his general Kamalasur to bring Shiva a captive. Gunesh went forward to the defence. The battle was quick and short and the great asur who had till then been considered invincible was cut to pieces. The stroke was so forceful that the three pieces of his body were thrown in three directions. His head feel at Morgaon, his torso at Rajur and legs at Padmalaya. The head of Kamalasur that fell at Morgaon

was adopted as a seat by Gunesh. He rested at the spot and then ordered Vishvakarma to construct a new township around. This town erected by Vishvakarma is none else than Mayureshwar kshetra. But this respite could not be long as Sindhu was still alive. Gunesh now decided to take the offensive himself. He collected a large army of Shiva's ganas under his banner. Such formidable warriors as Nandikesvar and Bhutanath were amongst his lieutenants. Kamalasur was already dead and the initial skirmishes with Sindhu's armies were won without much eflort. Nothing seemed too difficult. Having heard of the reverses, Sindhu decided to march in person. The first day's battle was severe but undecisive, but there was no gainsaying the fact that the asur had the upper hand. Nandikeshvar, Bhutanath, Pushpadant all were put out of action. Only Gunesh remained in the field. The second day's charge by the daityas was so furious that for a while Gunesh was confused. Sindhu was quick to appreciate this fact and to make him more nervous launched a verbal tirade scolding Gunesh for daring to march against Him, the Lord of the Three Lokas, the conqueror of all gods. The asur lamented that he was obliged to put an end to the life of such a nice young lad. This boastful threat had an altogether different effect on the young warrior. Instead of losing courage, he became more determined than ever to put an end to this menace to the gods. There ensued a stiff battle between the two warriors both of whom had indomitable courage and great strength. Ultimately the scales tilted in favour of Gunesh. He cut off the ears of the asur, struck his amkush against Sindhu's forehead and then delivered a final blow against his broad chest. Blood emitted from his mouth and the demon fell dead on the ground.

The parents embraced their victorious son. Gods

flocked together to praise and worship Gunesh. The victor re-established the old order, Indra was again made the ruler of Swarga, Yama that of Patala Loka, Vishnu and Shiva reassigned to their former duties. Brahmadeva offered his two daughters, Siddhi and Buddhi to Gunesh in marriage. The marriage was celebrated on a grand scale in Gandaki itself. But the joy of the gods was short-lived as Gunesh soon made known his intention of bringing to an end his 'avatara'. He tried to console his mother by pointing out that he had assumed this incarnation for a specific purpose and having achieved it he could not continue to hang on. Had he not so many other worthy tasks to perform? Was his presence not needed at some other troubled spot? and moreover was she not aware of the universal law that every existence had an end? Of course Parvati knew and understood all this, but it was a parting and a final parting at that—there was little wonder it was so sad! Thus came to an end this, incarnation of Ganesh, famous as Gunesh. This very incarnation is also known as the 'Vikata-avatara'. To commemorate the avatar and the great deeds of Gunesh the gods under the leadership of Brahmadeva got together and built a temple to Gunesh, and established his image there. The worship and 'upasana' still continue at the place—Mayura kshetra.

However, all this fails to explain as to how this deity came to be known as Mayureshvar. Another tale explains it. It relates to the childhood of Gunesh, the other characters being Kadru, the mother of the serpents and Vinita the mother of Garuda. The latter was one day extremely distressed to find that Garuda was put behind the bars by the sons of Kadru. Her most natural recourse was an appeal to Kashyap, her husband. The sage instead of taking any action to set at liberty Garuda advised her to be calm and patient. In course of time she would get

another son and he would liberate Garuda! Vinita accordingly gave birth after some time not to a son but to a great egg. She had to hatch it for years and years and only then the son would come out. This she undertook jealously and always kept a careful watch on the egg so as to protect it from any harm. Now it so happened that one day while she was away on some errand young Gunesh came across the egg in one of his roaming missions. He probed the egg out of curiosity. To his great bewilderment it broke open and a very sturdy bird emerged from it. This was a full-grown peacock—a Mayur. The bird immediately attacked Gunesh and a very stiff struggle ensued. Ultimately however, Gunesh could overcome the peacock. Vinita appeared on the scene during the scuffle and came to know that it was Gunesh who had broken open the egg. At this moment she remembered that Kashyap had told her that her son would serve the person who would break the egg. This she narrated to the two of them and both readily agreed to accept the respective roles, Gunesh the master or lord and Mayur the servant or vehicle, Mayur then requested Gunesh that his name be prefixed to that of Gunesh and hence the name Mayureshvar. Mayur served his divine master well in his struggle against Sindhu daitya in later years.

The present temple is, of course, a much later structure. It was built, according to tradition, by one Moreshvar Gole. This gentleman was an important official attached to the treasury of the Bidar Sultans. He was a great devotee of Ganesh and also of Shri Ganesh Yogindra, more about whom later. He was responsible for the construction of the enclosing walls and aisles, dipmalas, pavements and so on. For this he utilised the money from the Sultan's treasury. The story goes that this was reported to the King who post-haste bore down to the headquarters of this Gole. The gentleman blandly

replied that the money was safe in the coffers at Supa and what the Sultan had heard was a mischievous lie ! The Sultan proceeded to Supa forthwith and found the coffers full as Gole had stated. Gunesh had no doubt come to the rescue of his devotee! But this was not all. To verify matters further the Sultan proceeded to Morgoan. Here instead of a temple he saw a dargah and a mosque. No trace of the temple existed. Greatly pleased the Sultan made a sumptuous present to the dargah and departed. Before long the dargah and the mosque disappeared and the temple reappeared. As mentioned earlier, and Kurundwadkar constructed the sabhamandap. Some of the surrounding aisles were caused to be built by Sardar Mujumdar from Poona. Amrit Rao, the son of Peshwa Bajirao II, was a great devotee of this deity and a pupil of Shri Ganesh Yogindra. He was responsible for the erection of the great arched gateway with the drumhouse on its top. As with other religious centres of this area this shrine received several presents and grants during the Maratha period, especially under the regime of the Peshwas, whose family deity was Ganesh. But in addition to this, there was another factor that was far more important in attracting the attention of the people to this kshetra. And that was the presence here of two great saints of the Ganesh Sampradaya.

The first of them was 'Moraya Gosavi' and the other Shri Ganesh Yogindra. The first belonged to the fourteenth century. One Vamanbhat Shaligram, a resident of the Karnatak area, while on a pilgrimage came to Morgaon. Here he learnt of the great prowess of the deity and made up his mind to stay there for the 'seva' or service of the god. This gentleman was childless and he served the deity for fifty years. His devotion was so great that ultimately Gunesh was pleased with him and he begot a son in 1375. The child was christened Moreshvar or Moraya after the

God. This child displayed great devotion to Ganesh. Various incidents occurred to strengthen this devotion much further. The young Moraya had gone to the nearby jungles to collect flowers for Mayureshvar's worship when a serpent bit him. He died almost instantaneously. By a very fortunate chance a great Sanyasin, 'Nayan Bharati,' was passing along the spot. He saw the whole sorry incident and utilising his great spiritual powers he had received through the upasana of Ganesh, brought the boy back to life. He also imparted a 'mantra' to Moraya that made his future greatness possible. Moraya came back to his home and henceforth devoted all his time and energy to the service and 'upasana' of Ganesh. After some years Ganesh was satisfied by his devotion and Moraya found an image of Ganapati in the 'Amkush tirth.' This he considered to be the 'prasada' or gift from the god and established it at Chinchwad, another important centre of the Ganesh cult since then. Although Chinchwad, a small village some ten miles to the north of Poona is not one of the ashtavinayaks, it enjoys immense repute because of its association with Shri Moraya Gosavi. Today in the court-yard of the Mayureshvar temple a tree is shown beneath which Moraya Gosavi received enlightenment. After he received this 'true knowledge' he decided to shift his headquarters to Chinchwad. However, throughout the rest of his life he continued to visit the shrine during the months of Magha and Bhadrapad every year. The followers of Shri Moraya Gosavi are numerous and like him consider Morgaon as the pre-eminent centre of Ganesh worship.

The other person was Shri Ganesh Yogindra. He belonged to a more recent period and a good many things about his life and deeds are known. One thing known with a definite amount of eertainty is that he accepted Samadhi in 1805 A.D. The followers of his sampradaya maintain

that he was born in 1577 A.D., came to Morgaon in 1598 A.D, and stayed there nearly for two hundred years. Peshwa Bajirao and Peshwa Chimnaji Appa, his brother, were the pupils of Ganesh Yogindra and granted a village near Baramati for the maintenance of this shrine at the instance of the Swamin. Peshwa Madhavrao was also under the influence of the Saint and Amrit Rao Peshwa built the gate etc. on instructions from Ganesh Yogindra. One might or might not believe in the rather unusual figure mentioned as the span of Yogindra's life. However, Ganesh Yogindra achieved such repute not because he caused to be built the shrine or its surroundings, but because of his very solid contributions to the Ganesh cult. His work may be considered to be the very foundation of the philosophy and practices of the Ganesh sect. The yogi spent two decades of his life in japa-tapa and tirth-yatras and then devoted his entire attention to the search, editing and interpretation of the ancient texts of the Ganesh cult. From his studies he came to the conclusion that unless he could lay his hands on the works of one Mudgal rishi, mainly a Purana written by him and a volume containing his teachings the would not receive a real insight into the Ganesh cult. Ganesh Yogindra searched for these texts at various places but to no use. He was not able to procure any of them. In desperation he decided to approach Ganesh himself, and prayed him that his desire be fulfilled. His prayers bore fruit. One day a brahmin appeared in the temple and asked to see Ganesh Yogindra. On being led to him, the brahmin said that he had heard that the Yogin was in search of some works and thought that he could be of some help. The Yogin welcomed him and explained to him what he was after. The brahmin promised to return later and when he came he brought with him some portions of the Mudgal Purana. Ganesh Yogindra copied them. This went on for some time, the brahmin after

every interval bringing in some parts of Mudgal's work. After he had handed over the last instalment to the Yogin the latter had a sudden feeling that there was something unusual about the brahmin; it dawned on him that he must have been none else than Mayureshvar himself. But by now the brahmin had already left without leaving any trace and the grief of the yogin at not being able to meet and worship his god knew no bounds. He came into the garbhagriha and started his prayers. This had the desired effect. Ganesh in his true form made his appearance before the Yogin. At this time he instructed Ganesh Yogindra to devote his life to the editing and interpretation of literature regarding the Ganesh cult, to establish a school or math for the study of this philosophy and for the spread of the Ganesh sampradaya. There was nothing nearer to the heart of the Yogin; and with a divine order to back it, he resumed his work zealously. And almost all textual foundation for the Ganesh cult comes from his pen. A copy of the Mudgal Purana in the handwriting of Ganesh Yogindra is preserved in the math at Mayureshvar. His greatest work is the 'Ganesh Vijaya,' a work that describes the various avataras of the god and also explains the philosophical aspects of the sect.

The Yogin was also a powerful artist. In a cell of the surrounding aisle where he used to sit and where there is a Ganesh image established by himself, he has painted various incidents described in the Mudgal Purana. The paintings are greatly faded but whatever remains shows a highly developed artistic presentation, in the best Maratha style.

This cell and the samadhi of the Yogin are musts in any visit to the kshetra. The disciples of Yogindra, especially Shri Subrahmanyam, founded a math near the temple and the tradition of devotion and study is continued by the present directors of the math.

The daily worship is performed thrice, the first at seven o'clock in the morning, the next at twelve o'clock and the third one at eight in the evening. Of these pujas the first two are shodashopachari—the last one panchopachari - consisting of five rites. The sixteen rites are they same everywhere. The menu for the naivedyas of the three pujas are fixed at this kshetra, khichadi that is, spiced rice and chapati for the morning worship, a full meal for the afternoon and rice and milk in the evening. There are hereditary priests and the sessions are distributed amongst them. The Dheres perform the morning puja, the Kuntes the afternoon one and the two together perform the evening puja. In addition to these three sessions bythe Brahmin pujaris, two pujas are performed by priests belonging to the Gurava caste, the first early in the morning at five o'clock and the other at four in the afternoon. They are known as prakshalapujas and there are no fixed upacharas or any fixed naivedyas for these pujas. Alamkara pujas—when ceremonial robes and ornaments are placed on the image—take place on most of the important festivals throughout the year and during the six days of the fair in the month of Bhadrapad and Magha. Such alamkara puja can also be seen on payment of a fixed sum to the priests. As far as the visitor is concerned, if he wants to present a puja or some other offering, there are no fixed standard rates as at other kshetras and it is entirely on the free will of the person concerned. The priests who are also the kshetropathyayas of the place of course guide him in these matters especially in the matter of the types of worships or the other rites that are performed here. These rites include the inevitable dwarayatras, the tirth-snanas and the worship of the deity. The temple is open from five in the morning to ten in the evening for any visitor. At ten the god is supposed to go to bed.

Of the bigger festivals at the kshetra, four are worth

special mention. The first is Vijayadashami, then the fourth day—practically all the first four days of the first half of the month of Bhadrapad and also of Magha and the Somavati amavasyas—no-moon days falling on Mondays. These no-moon days are four in a year. The chief item of the Somavati celebrations is a palanquin procession of the image. The image is taken to the river accompanied by musical bands, the insignia of royalty such as Chhatra (umbrella), abdagirs, (fly-whisks) etc. are held over the image. Then the image is bathed on the Karha and a worship takes place there. Singing of prayers follows and then the procession returns to the temple. The Bhadrapad chaturthi is the Ganesh Chaturti and is celebrated everywhere in Maharashtra. Here it is observed with great pomp and festivity. Devotees of Ganesh from all over gather here. Amongst the most prominent visitors is the Ganesh or Shri Mangalmurti of Chinchwad, that is brought here by the Devas, the caretakers of that kshetra. In addition to ceremonial worships, processions etc. bhajans, kirtans, pravachans etc. constitute the main items of the celebrations. The Vijayadashami—the tenth day of the month of Ashvin, is celebrated most enthusiastically. All those whose original home was Morgaon make it a point to attend this function. The chief feature, of course, is the traditional 'Seemollanghan.' By about ten-thirty at night the arrangements for a procession are complete. Then at eleven a huge palanquin procession is taken out. A large contingent of musicians lead the advance guard. The full paraphernalia is in attendance. Bearers of mace, chhatri, abdagir etc. are decked out in traditional scarlet uniforms. Other dignitaries are there to discharge the traditional chores of the festival. During the march extremely colourful fireworks take place. The palkhi rests near the temple of Soneshvar. Here the entire population of the village gathers. A very unusual feature of this meeting

then takes place. A very long list of the dignitaries of the village is read out. The names are arranged according to the customary importance of each family. By early morning the procession returns to the shrine where prayers take place marking the end of the festivity.

The kshera of Morgaon is important not only as one of the ashtavinayaks but also as the chief centre of what is known as the Ganesh Sampradaya.

भीमाया दक्षिणे भागे कृष्णायाश्चोत्तरे तटे
कमण्डलुनदीतीरे मयूरेश्वरपट्टणम् ।
भूमिस्वानंदभवनं मयूरेशमितीस्मृतम्
सर्वक्षेत्रमिती प्रोक्तं क्षेत्रराजमिती स्मृतम् ।
प्रतिष्ठितं पञ्चदैवैहि क्षेत्रं स्वानंदनिमितम्
यत्र ब्रह्मपतिः साक्षात्क्षेत्रं स्वानंदवाचकम् ।
कमण्डलुर्नदीतस्य साम्यं किं भवतीत्य हो
ब्रह्म भूयकरं प्रोक्तं वेदादिष्विदमेकम् ।

This verse eulogises the Mayuresh kshetra as the king amongst the kshetras. It is situated south of the Bhima and to the north of the Krishna and stands on the banks of the river Kamandalu. It is created by god himself, and is famous as Swanandabhumi.

सुरासुरमयं क्षेत्रं गाणेशं ब्रह्मवाचकम्
साक्षात्कृतं शिवाद्यैश्च क्षेत्रं दैवं ततः स्मृतम् ।
कमलमस्तकस्थत्वात् पश्चादासुरकं स्मृतम्
तयोर्योगे स्वसंवेद्यं सर्वादौ तत्प्रकथ्यते ।

This kshetra is constituted by both the divine, (Sura) and demonic (asura) elements as it was here that gods like Shiva have pleased Ganesh with their penance and it was at this very place that the head of Kamalasur fell down.

The following verse describes how the limits of the kshetra contracted during the various ages. In the Krita-age its boundaries reached all the four quarters, and as each age passed they contracted till in the Kali age they are confined to nothing more than the limits of the temple.

रमेशाद्यावरणानां चतुर्दिक्ष्युकृतयुगे ।
मयूरेशपट्टणम् स्याद्विस्तीर्णम् तु ममप्रिये ।।
अष्टरुद्रावरणांतं द्वितीयेतु प्रकीर्तीतं ।
प्रमोदामोदयोगिनी बुद्धीसिध्यंत संस्थिता ।।
मयूरेशपुरी रम्यां युगे द्वापरके स्थिता
कलौ साहस्रवर्षान्तं मयूरेशालयस्य च ।।
परितः क्रोशमाला च स्थिता सा च महापुरी ।।

ध्यायेत्सिहगतं विनायकममुं दिग्बाहुमाद्ये युगे
त्रेतायां तु मयूरवाहनममुं षड्बाहुकं सिद्धीदं ।
द्वापारे तु गजाननं युगभुजं रक्तांगरागं विभुं
तुर्ये तु द्विभुजं सितांग रुचिरं सर्वार्थदं सर्वदा ।

The above poem describes the four Incarnations of the Ganesh in the various ages. He assumed the Vinayak-avatar in the first age, in the Treta age he was Mayu-reshvar, and in the Dvapara yuga he was Gajanana.

प्रथमं वक्रतुण्डं च एकदष्ट्र द्वितीयकम् ।
तृतीयं कृष्णपिङ्गाक्षं गजवक्त्रं चतुर्थकम् ।
लंबोदरं पंचमं च षष्ठं विकटमेवच ।
सप्तमं विघ्नराजेन्द्रं धूम्रवर्णं तथाष्टमम् ।
नवमं भालचंद्रं च दशमं तु विनायकं ।
एकादशं गणपति द्वादशं तु गजाननं ।

This is the nama-stotra of Ganesh, giving the various names by which Ganesh is known. They are twelve in number Vakratunda, Ekadamshtra, Krishnapingaksha, Gajavaktra, Lambodara, Vikata, Vighnaraj, Dhumravarna Bhalachandra, Vinayak, Ganapati and Gajanana.

The following two are the aratis of Ganesh, the first one specially relating to the Ganesh at the Mayuresh kshetra and the other one said to have been composed by Ramdas at this very temple although it does not refer directly to the deity or the kshetra.

The first arati describes the four dwaras of the kshetra as well as the legendary aspect of the kshetra, but it is not necessary to repeat these details as they have been described earlier.

जय देव जय देव जय मोरेश्वरा
भूमिस्वानंदाधीशा हे करुणागारा ।।
धर्मप लक्ष्मीनारायण पूर्वद्वारी
अर्थप गौरीशंकर दक्षिणि साचारी
कामप रतिकंदर्पासह पश्चिमि गौरी
मोक्षप रवि महिवराहसंगति उत्तरीं ।। १ ।।

एवं चतुःपुमर्थाऽभेद स्वानंद
तद्रूप क्षेत्राधिप तू परमानंद
श्रीमद्ब्रह्मकमण्डलु जे त्रिगुणाऽभेद
गाणप पंचम केवळ वर्णितसे वेद ।। २ ।।

जडभरताश्रम म्हणूनि सर्वत्र प्रसिद्ध
भूखंडेतर निर्मळ निर्मायिक क्षेत्र
'याहि मयूररोमभि' रिति वैदिक मंत्र
बोधी ब्रह्मप्रद हे सुलभ समयतंत्र ।। ३ ।।

श्रीगुरुगणेशयति हे कमंडलुतीरी
श्रीमद्विघनहरादिक राहती परिवारी
तो हा ब्रह्मविनायक नांदे मुदकारी
परमानंदे आरति करि अंकुशधारी ।। ४ ।।

This arati is the most popular prayer of Ganesh in this region. It contains very little of iconographical references and its main content is a prayer to the deity who is described by the most commonplace adjectives.

सुखकर्ता दुःखहर्ता वार्ता विघ्नाची
नुरवी पुरवी प्रेम कृपा जयाची
सर्वांगीं सुंदर उटि शेंदुराची
कंठीं झळके माळ मुक्ताफळाची ।।

जय देव जय देव जय मंगलमूर्ति
दर्शनमात्रे मनकामना पुरती ॥

रत्नखचित फरा तुज गौरीकुमरा
चंदनाची उटि कुमकुम केशरा
हिरेजडित मुगुट शोभतो बरा
रुणझुणतीं नुपुरें चरणी घागरिया ॥ १ ॥

लंबोदर पीतांबर फणिवरबंधना
सरळ सोंड वक्रतुंड त्रिनयना
दास रामाचा वाट पाहे सदना
संकष्टीं पावावें निर्वाणीं रक्षावें सुरवरवंदना ॥ २ ॥

KOLHAPUR

MAHALAKSHMI

वाराणस्याधिकं क्षेत्रं करवीरं पुरं महत् । (करवीर–माहात्म्य)

KARVIR, the modern Kolhapur, the abode of the great goddess Mahalakshmi, was well known all over India as a holy place from ancient times. Pilgrims from far and near have continued to flock here in their thousands every year during the last thousand years, may be even earlier. So great was indeed its repute that it was known as 'Dakshim-Kashi,' the Kashi of the south. And as the legend goes it weighed in importance more than Kashi itself. It so happened that once upon a time Shiva and Mahalakshmi were discussing their respective habitats. In the course of these talks a dispute arose as to which was more important, Kashi the abode of Shiva or Karvir that of Mahalakshmi. Both agreed to go to Vishnu for settling the controversy. The Lord of Vaikunth picked up a pair of scales, placed Kashi in one pan, Karvir in the other, and it need hardly be told that Karvir proved to be heavier of the two. Be it as it may, one thing is certain, Kolhapur is a sacred spot of Hinduism since historical times.

The history of the shakt sect is far from complete, and very little is known with any amount of certainty about how that sect had fared in Maharashtra. There is some ground to believe that during the early medieval ages shaktism with its various mantras and tantras did prevail in this region. Literature of several Marathi saints contains several references to shakt worship. Tukaram and Dinkarswami, the disciple of Swami Ramdas, have mentioned the various rites the shakts practised. These and other saints are strongly critical of what they consider to be the 'anachars' practised by

the shakts—especially the observance of the rites known as the 'panch-makars.' However, there is little evidence to believe that these orthodox practices are presently current at any of the shakti-piths in this area. The most important such piths of Maharashtra are four in number, although, technically considered to be only three and a half. They are those at Kolhapur, Mahur, Saptshringi and Tuljapur. Some consider Saptshringi to be the one half pith, others maintain that it is Kolhapur that is half a pith. The goddess at Tuljapur is known as Bhavani; the one at Kolhapur as Mahalakshmi and as Amba; and that at Mahur as Mahamaya Renuka. The devi at Saptshringi is Jagadamba. All these are extremely popular in the region. Apart from these four or three and a half piths, there are numerous others like Ambe-Jogai in the Osmanabad district and Aundh in the Satara district. These centres are however, of secondary importance. Several castes and families of Maharashtra worship one of the above deities as their family goddess.

Tuljapur or Turajapur and Kolhapur or Karvirnagar are selected here for a detailed description, the latter because of its great antiquity and the vast number of devotees the goddess commands; the former because of the immense popularity it enjoys as the guardian of the great Shivaji. Historically and culturally these two easily stand out as the most prominent shakti-piths of Maharashtra.

Kolhapur, the headquarters of the district of the same name is an important political centre for a very long time. In the twelfth century it was the capital of the Shilahars; during Islamic rule Panhala, the fort that commands this city was an administrative centre; in the eighteenth century the Junior branch of the Bhosales, that of Tarabai established a 'gadi'—an independent kingdom, at Kolhapur. The city has road, rail and air approaches. Kolhapur lies some hundred and fifty miles south of Poona on the Poona-Banga-

lore national highway. State buses constantly ply between the two cities. Direct bus connections exist between Bombay and Kolhapur, and the latter is similarly linked with all the surrounding district places. A route branches off due north-east from Miraj on the Poona-Bangalore section of the Southern railway. There is no regular air-service, although a good airport exists at this place.

Unlike most of the tirths, there are no professional upadhyayas or pandyas, professional hosts, who would entertain a pilgrim. But some of the 'pujaris,' regular priests of the devi, do accommodate visitors. In addition, a number of good guest-houses are there, and a pilgrim would find little difficulty in finding some suitable accommodation. Taxis and horse-drawn tongas provide the local transport needed. The town is situated on the banks of the Panchaganga river and is literally littered with temples, ancient, medieval and modern. The giant structure of the Mahalakshmi shrine is the focal point of all attraction and devotion.

Modern houses crowd all around the 'prakara' of the shrine. It is practically hidden off by them. And not till one enters the courtyard through the lofty arches of the gateways that the grandeur of the concept is evident. Although greatly altered in comparatively recent times, the original architectural concept continues to be strikingly impressive. The shrine is crucifix on plan and is surrounded by a spacious courtyard. The western gateway is the main entrance, known as Mahadwara. On either side of the road leading up to the Mahadwara are small shops offering flowers, kumkum, gulal, coconuts, pedhas and chane and sundry other substances used either in the worship of the deity or commonly presented to it. Once inside the Mahadwara, on either side of which are a number of dipmalas, one comes upon a large open hall of timber construction. The huge square pillars and foliated arches in wood are

characteristic of Maratha temple architecture. The Mandap is known as Garuda-mandap and was constructed during the eighteenth century. An image of Garuda, the vahana of Vishnu, is housed in this mandap so as to face the goddess. Adjoining it towards the east is a small mandap of stone construction. It is built on a raised plinth. An image of Ganesh nearly four feet in height stands in the centre facing the goddess. Further to the east of this Ganesh-mandap is the central hall in which all the three shrines of the crucifix open. The entrance to each is preceded by a small mandap. In the central shrine, facing the west, stands the Mahalakshmi. The northern shrine is occupied by Mahakali, the southern one by Mahasaraswati. Of these, the temples of Mahalakshmi and of Mahakali are structurally and architecturally akin to each other; while the third one though occupying a very logical position in the architectural scheme, greatly differs in its general treatment. This is, in all probability a later substitution for an earlier one standing on the same spot. The construction of the great complex is mortarless and resembles closely that of temple structures of the early medieval period of the Deccan. Vertical offsets and numerous horizontal mouldings create a rich shade and light pattern. This effect is greatly enhanced by exquisite figure sculpture. Female figurines in various graceful dancing poses, figures of musicians playing flutes, lutes and drums, constitute the majority of the figures, Images of mythological persons and gods and goddesses are also seen. A number of these sculptures are modern plaster or stone replacements of older ones disfigured or destroyed by the Moslem rulers of the land. These replacements, however, are faithful to the original in form and spirit and the difference between the extant originals and the later additions is hardly visible. The shikhars of the shrines are in brick and mortar, and are

devoid of decoration of any sort whatever. They belong to the nineteenth century. This renovation of the shrine keeps harmony with the older structure.

Like most of the temples, this shrine plays host to a number of other images. There is very little method or discipline in this unwieldy congregation. An extremely unusual position is occupied by a Shiva ling. Immediately above the garbhagriha of the Mahalakshmi shrine is a second storey. Here a Shiva ling and a nandi are placed, by whom and when no one knows. The niches facing the three cardinal directions house Venkatesh, Katyayani, and Gauri-Shankar, facing the north, east and south in that order. Formerly a number of images of various gods and goddesses occupied any place they chose in the courtyard; this 'encroachment' is now removed and most of them are housed in the cells of the arcade that surrounds the courtyard, These images belong to various periods stylistically, some going back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, others not older than the eighteenth century, But for the images of Rama-Sita and Radha-Krishna and one or two others, the rest are in black basalt. That of Rama-Sita etc. are in white marble. A mention might be made of the members of this colourful congregation. There is the marble image of Ganesh known as Siddhi-vinayak; then come the Nav-grahs, Surya, Mahisha-surmardini, Vitthal-Rakhmai, Radha-Krishna, Rama-Lakshman-Sita, Shiva, Sheshashai Vishnu, Malhari-Mhalsa, Muralidhara Krishna, Kalabhairav and Tutja-bhavani. These guests are regularly worshipped by some priest of the other and the Karvir-Mahatmya, a composition of late date (18th Century) has managed to bring all of them in some kind of relation with the legends regarding the chief deity—Mahalakshmi. In the same courtyard is the Manikarnika kund. It is square on plan, flights of several steps lead down to the water from the

north and south. On its bank is Vishveshvar Mahadev. A bath in this kund followed by the 'darshan' of Vishveshvar and Mahalakshmi is the giver of great good 'punya.' During the Shiva or third 'kalp', while Shiva and Parvati were staying here, the goddess lost a kundal or earring. It was of pearls—mani. The 'ganas' of Shiva searched for it and went on even to dig the earth to recover it. They found it deep in the earth. The goddess greatly pleased at this, turned the ditch into a tirth and named it 'Manikarnika' after her manikundal.

Leaving the prakara and returning to the central shrine, an extremely noteworthy fact is, that although it is Mahalakshmi that is the chief deity, the tirth as anciently known consists of four elements. They are, the Mahalakshmi, the Mahakali, the Mahasaraswati and Kanka Bhairav. Saraswati Purana, dating back to the thirteenth century A.D. mentions that Solanki Jayasimha Siddharaj of Anhilwad (1093-1142 A.D.) erected at his capital, on the lake Siddha Sarovar, a pith which was expressly a copy of the one at Karvir. This pith consisted of Mahalakshmi, Mahakali, Kolla and Kanka-Bhairav. Mahalakshmi the chief goddess was to the east, Kolla to the north. The present Mahasaraswati, it seems, occupies the place of the Puranic Kolla and was known by that name. Kanka Bhairav is nowhere in the immediate vicinity of the present shrine. But the Ranka Bhairav near the Rankala lake is identified by scholars with the ancient Kanka Bhairav. A similar replica of the Kolhapur pith was established at Dodda-Gaddavlila, although in place of Mahasaraswati there is Vishnu and Bhutanath for Bhairav. At Gorepalle in Andhra also is there such a pith. No better evidence of the high esteem in which this particular deity was regarded during the early medieval ages is required. The devotees not only came to visit the goddess at her own habitat, but installed her

replicas, tried to recreate the pith, so as to be constantly in her presence.

Two giant dwarapalas, carved in the best manner of early sculpture, welcome the visitor at the entrance of the Mahalakshmi mandap. These were repaired on occasions, references from the Maratha period alone indicating that such repairs were needed at least thrice during some fifty years between 1760 and 1800. The image of the goddess has an extremely pleasant appearance. It is carved in black stone, is about three feet in height and has four arms. The typical ayudhas of the devi are as follows. In the lower right hand is the matulinga, a fruit not unlike the ordinary lemon, but much larger in size. In the upper right hand is a large mace, kaumodaks, its head touching the ground. The upper left hand holds the shield or khetaka, the lower one holding a bowl i.e. panpatra. On the crown of the devi are a cobra-hood and a Shiva-ling with a yoni around it. Standing behind the devi is her vahana—a lion. The iconographical descriptions of the goddess, going back to the thirteenth century or even earlier according to some authorities, resemble most of the lakshanas of the present image. The earliest mention comes from the Vishvakarmashastra as quoted by Hemadri in his Chaturvargachintamani. It refers specifically to the Karvirvasini Mahalakshmi. The relevant lines run as follows :

क्षेत्रे कोल्लापुरादन्ये महालक्ष्मीर्यदोच्यते ।
लक्ष्मी वत्सा तदा कार्या रूपाभरणभूषिता ।।
दक्षिणाधःकरे पात्रामूर्ध्वे कौमोदकी ततः ।
वामोर्ध्वे खेटकं धत्ते श्रीफलं तदधःकरे ।
बिभ्रति मस्तके लिंगं पूजनीया विभूतये ।

This description is reproduced by the Ruparatna and Rupamandan (Circa 1500 A.D.) with some slight alterations. It is to be noted that discrepancies exist between the above descriptions and the state of the present image.

The bowl is held in the lower left and not in the lower right hand, the shriphal is replaced by the mahalinga and it is the lower right hand that holds it. Similarly no mention of the nagahood occurs in the Vishvakarmashastra descriptions. The Markandeya Purana contains a section entitled Devi-mahatmya which narrates the murtilakshanas as below :

मातुर्लिगं गदा खेटं पानपात्रं च बिभ्रति ।
नागं लिगं च योनिं च बिभ्रति नृपमूर्धनि ।

However, the date of this Devi-mahatmya is uncertain. The Nityakarmasamgraha, a compilation of the late medieval period repeats this description in all its main aspects.

The several differences between the textual references and the image as seen today can be accounted for in two ways. Either they are due to defective observation on the part of the authors of the earlier works, or the image described is not the same. Both are possible, the latter being the more likely explanation. It was a common practice to replace an idol that had in any way become unfit for the prescribed religious rites to be carried out in the day-to-day worship. The substitution of the new image was, however, carried out in confirmation to the requisite traditional and textual rituals. Iconographic details were usually left unaltered. Thus the continuity of tradition and the sanctity of the kshetra remained unaffected in any manner. It is also well-known that during times of distress, especially during the medieval period, when Moslem iconoclastic zeal was a constant source of danger to the temples and their images, the idol was often removed to a safer refuge. The Karvirvasini devi did not escape this fate. As would be later shown the devi could breathe freely in her ancient abode only after the Maratha power became firm in this region under Shahu. And it is not at all improbable that in this process some harm reached the image. The present

image was only recently treated with 'vajralepa', a hard coating that has restored the image to its former beauty.

A fact having a direct bearing on the iconographic aspect and also on the cult rites once practised in this temple, is the existence of a sculptured 'Shri Yantra' on one of the walls of the temple in the mandap. This Yantra formed an important part in the ritual worships of the Shakti sect. It is carved in a dark corner of the temple and more often than not the visitor misses it. This is a tell-tale carving and indicates clearly the Shakti acharas and worships.

An interesting structural arrangement is noteworthy in connection with the orientation of the image. The images generally face either the north or the east. Here it faces the west. There is a small window in the western wall and once a year, when the sun sets at the exact west its rays fall on the face of the image through this window. This period lasts for three days, each time, the 21st, of the months of March and September. It is considered an extremely auspicious sight and on all the three evenings the temple is thickly crowded by people eager to have a glimpse of the beautiful image bathing in the golden rays of the setting sun.

The impression of disorder arising out of the great hotchpotch congregation of refugee images that one used to get a decade ago is now greatly relieved by the systematic clearance work undertaken by the management. At the same time it is to be pointed out that the existence of all sorts of shops right under the roof of the Garuda mandap is distinctly unharmonious with the peaceful and pious atmosphere that one expects in such a famous shrine. It is a cheap encroachment on the dignity of the kshetra.

The daily worship of the goddess consists of five different sessions. This is a common mode of daily rituals in the Marathi region. The Karvir-mahatmya states that

anybody who is present and witnesses any of these three sessions for a period of one and a half months accumulates the greatest possible amount of punya. The first session is commonly known as Kakadarati. It begins at five o'clock in the morning and the purpose is to awaken the deity. Kakada is a torch. This torch is taken in the garbhagriha and the goddess is awakened by singing her aratis. After the prayers are over, the image receives a wash. The puja arranged on the day before is removed and her feet are washed in milk. Sandalpaste is then applied, flowers placed on the image and it is attired in a new dress. After this worship is over, laudatory songs and aratis are sung. This is the karpur-arati, when camphor is burnt before the image. For fifteen days of an year, the first or shukla fortnight of the month of Kartika, this routine is slightly changed. The entire image is washed in milk and not her feet alone. Outside in the nagarkhana on the Mahadwara musical instruments, especially sanai and chaughada play soft tunes.

The second worship of the goddess begins at eight in the morning. This is what is known as the 'shodashopachari' puja, a worship consisting of sixteen elements or rites. The origin of these rituals would be found in the customary manner of the reception of an honoured guest. However, great elaboration of these customs has taken place to suit the divine recipient of these honours. There are other forms of worship employing 108 rites, 64, 18, 16, 10 and 5. Of these, the ones employing 108 and 64 rites are used only in the Tantra form of devi worship. As stated earlier, the one consisting of sixteen upacharas is most commonplace, others being employed in the worship of particular deities on particular occasions.

The first upachara is avahan, invoking or inviting the particular deity to be worshipped. Suitable mantras are recited. Next an asana i,e. a seat is offered. Then

comes padya or water for washing the feet. After this is arghya water for washing the mouth. This water is scented with sandal and flowers. Except in the case of Shiva and Surya worship, this arghya is offered from a conch. The fifth rite is the offer of achaman, not unlike the offer of a drink of water. This water is sweetened by the addition of madhuparka, that is milk, curds, honey, ghee and sugar. Then comes the bath, which is mostly an elaborate affair. In the morning worship the bath is with plain water but in the afternoon (twelve o'clock) worship it is a 'panchamrit' snana. The image is bathed with milk, ghee, curds, honey and sugar. Perfumed water is used for this bath. The seventh upachara is draping the image with garments and ornaments. Specially offered sadis are put on the image after the afternoon worship. On festival days rich costumes and ornaments decorate the idol. Offering of perfume is the next rite. The most commonly used substance is sandal-paste. Other perfumes used are khus, saffron, camphor and musk. Next, flowers and leaves i.e. pushpapatra are offered, then dhupa or incense and dip or light. Fruits, sweets and other edibles constitute the naivedya then proffered to the goddess. Pan or tambula rounds off the naivedya. Presentation of gifts or dakshina follows tambuladan. Circumambulation is the last but one upachara. Arati or prayers bring to an end the session. This shodashopachari worship is performed in the Mahalakshmi temple with slight alterations here and there according to the time of the worship. While the morning worship is going on music is played or sung in the mandap. Singers come here of their own accord as service to the goddess.

The third puja is the most important of the day. In addition to all the sixteen rites mentioned above, there also takes place the panchamrit abhisheka and the maha-abhisheka. All these rites are performed except the presenta-

tion of the naivedya in full view of the visitors. The milk and panchamrit baths are certainly a sight worth beholding. A large gathering is present for this puja. Water is sprinkled from a conch on all present and tirth is distributed to all. At this time also the band in the nagarkhana is played.

The afternoon is comparatively quiet in the shrine, although devotees are coming and going all the time. The next session is the evening worship which is pancho-pachari. The day comes to an end with the 'shejaarati', when the goddess is put to sleep with appropriate devotional songs. Milk and sweets are offered to the goddess before this.

These are the daily rites observed. There are other periodic features connected with the temple rituals. First there is the 'palkhi'. On every Friday evening the utsava-murti, a smaller replica of the main idol, is placed in a palanquin. A procession is taken out to the accompaniment of music aud singing. The procession visits a number of deities in the courtyard and returns to the garbhagriha, where after singing the arati the celebration comes to an end. Except in the rainy season this palkhi is taken out on every full-moon day also. There also used to take place a chariot festival or 'rathotsava' on the full moon day of the month of Ashvin. Now that practice is changed, and it is observed on the full moon day of Chaitra. On the fifth day of the month of Ashvin the devi goes to meet Tryambuli, a goddess whose seat is on the nearby Tembalai Hill. The festival of Vijayadashami and the Navaratra preceding it are celebrated with great pomp and ceremony. After performing the traditional crossing of the borders, 'seemollanghan', the goddess returns via the locality of the untouchables where they welcome it most enthusiastically.

On all these occasions the image is clad in very rich

clothing and is decked out with various ornaments. The goddess has numerous precious ornaments in gold, pearl and stones. They are of the traditional Marathi pattern consisting of kundals, pimpalpans, chinchpetya, kantha and so on. Extremely valuable mukuts adorn the divine head on festival occasions.

No hard and fast rules exist regarding the timings of visiting the shrine. Everybody is allowed to go to the temple from five in the morning when the Kakadarati takes place to ten in the evening when the shejaarati is performed. Only when the mahanaivedya is being presented is the goddess shut off from public view by a screen. This is a precaution against any evil eye falling on tne offerings to the devi. Recently a rule is introduced by the management to the effect that for two hours in the evening, from five to seven, on Tuesdays and Fridays the temple is open only to female visitors. But this is a regulation arising out of practical considerations of convenience. No restrictions based on ritualistic grounds are imposed here on the darshan. People are constantly trickling in and out, and at all the three times of worship, kakadarati, afternoon worship, and shejaarati a good number of people are present. Visitors come from near and far and in addition there are regular local visitors.

Unlike many other kshetras there are no specific annual festivals as such, although the navaratras are the more prominent of the several festivals observed. No annual fair is held nor is there any custom of visiting this shrine every year like the one prevailing in the case of the Vithoba of Pandharpur. The devotees keep coming throughout the year. Many are pious pilgrims who are out to visit the tirths and kshetras of the land. But most are from families that consider the Ambabai or Mahalakshmi as their kulaswamini, family deity. The general custom is that members of these families visit

the shrine when some auspicious occasion such as marriage or the birth of a son takes place. The newly weds or the new born babe are brought here and the blessings of the goddess are sought for their benefit. This is a widely prevalent practice and if one is present in the temple one would notice at least a dozen such visitors within a single morning. Apart from those who trek here through family tradition, there are those who come to fulfil their vows. A wish or desire is expressed before the goddess and a promise is made to return the favour with some appropriate gift. This is known as 'navas' in marathi. A childless couple may take the vow that on begetting one they would present a sadi-choli, i.e., garments, to the devi. The manner of the fulfilment of the vow depends upon the promise made. If it is no more than the presentation of a sadi-choli, or the filling of the lap with bodice-cloth i. e. 'khan' and coconut, one has merely to purchase a set available immediately outside the temple and place it before the goddess. However, if it is something more than that, that is, if one wants to perform rites like Ekadashni or abhisheka, or wants to present a mahanaivedya or mahapuja, it is only through the priest that it can be done. There are no fixed routine rates for types of worship or kinds of offerings. But two practices are more common. One is filling the lap, other is presentation of a dress that is sadi-choli. Sets of both these including other necessary substances like kumkum, haladi, chane, etc. are sold in the shops outside the temple. The former costs one and a half-rupees, the latter five rupees. Any special rites cost according to what the priest in charge may determine. Coconuts, chane, pedhas and kumkum are given as the prasada of the devi. Lack of any irritating restrictions on the darshan, absence of any pestering pandyas and lack of insistence on any fixed monetary gifts keep the atmosphere clean and peaceful.

However, according to the Puranic texts the darshan of the Mahalakshmi does not end the proper pilgrimage to Karvir. The kshetra extends over a large area. Towards the east it reaches to the temple of Rameshvar-Mahadev in the village of Alate (twelve miles to the north east of Kolhapur), to the south is Chakreshvar near the village Titve (to the south west two miles off Valva), to the west Kalaheshvar near Kale (nine miles to the west in the Panhala subdivision) and to the north Mallikarjun where the linga is non-visible (gupta) at Gotkhind, that is, four miles due east of Itkare on the Kolhapur Poona road. The presiding deities of the four directions as far as Karvir goes are Ujjavalamba to the east near Ujalai hill ;Katyayani to the south, four miles on the hills of the same name; Siddhabatukeshvar to the west on the hill known as Chatkai-Matkai hill and Kedar to the north on Jyotiba hill nine miles from Kolhapur. A man or woman desirous of undertaking a pilgrimage of the kshetra is to take bath either in the Manikarnika kund, which is in the same compound as the Mahalakshmi temple, or in the Kashi-Vishveshvar kund opposite the Vishveshvar temple or in the Panchaganga river. Then he should perform the 'punyahvachan', worship the Ganesh, distribute gifts and dakshina and next day start on the yatra. The first to be visited and worshipped is Tryambuli on the Tembalai hill, then he should visit the Sakshivinayak. There are lists of twelve to eighteen temples that should be included in the itinerary, most of them being in the temple courtyard and Ranka-Bhairav on the Rankala lake. Various tirths and kunds like Amrikund, Padmatirth, Suryatirth are mentioned. In view of the fact that on the area now occupied by the town there were not in the too distant past a number of lakes small and large, it is not at all surprising to find so many kunds and tirths. Anybody who has to perform this yatra in accordance with these regulations would have

to enlist the aid of a priest, not only for the proper performance of rituals but also for finding out which is what.

There are numerous legends in literature like the Mahabharat and other mythological works. The chief amongst the latter is the Padma-Purana which has a separate section devoted to the Karvir kshetra. This is known as the Karvir Mahatmya. The Devi-Mahatmya from the Markandeya Purana contains several legendary references to the kshetra. Jaina works like the Brihatkathakosha contain some tales regarding Karvir.

The Karvir mahatmya states that this sacred place was the creation of Vishnu, who stays here in the Mahalakshmi form and at Varanashi in the Shiva form for the mukti, the final liberation of his devotees. The Harivamsha has a different tale to tell. The story comes in connection with the struggle between Shri Krishna and Jarasandha, the Lord of Magadha. Vikadru, an elderly member of the Yadav clan narrates the history of the expansion of the Yadu kula to Shri Krishna. Once upon a time, Yadu, the son of Haryashva went to the seas for 'jalakrida' along with his wives and attendants. While he was thus engaged in the lighthearted sport, Dhumravarna the Lord of the Naga-Loka all of a sudden caught hold of him and dragged him to his Loka. Here he was received most respectfully and taken to the magnificent mansion of Dhumravarna and seated on a lotus-throne, entertained most lavishly. Then the Lord of the Nagas offered his daughters in marriage to Yadu. The latter could not reject the offer and his hesitation, if any, was set at rest when Dhumravarna told him that the offsprings of the match were destined to royalty. Marriages were duly celebrated after which Yadu reached his capital with five beautiful brides clad in exquisite clothes and ornaments bestowed by their father. In due course Yadu got five sons from his five wives. The children wore all the marks—lakshanas—of royalty, were properly trained and when came

of age were powerful personalities. They requested their father to entrust them some tasks worthy of their prowess. Yadu entrusted to them a formidable task, that of populating the country south of the Vindhyas. Muchukund founded Mahishmati on the banks of the river Narmada. He also established a township named Purika in the area between the Vindhya and the Rikshavan mountains. Harita undertook the protection of the outlying island centres of the empire. Saras founded the nagari of Kraunchpura. Padmavarna travelled further southwards, entered the heart of the Sahyadris and chose a densely forested spot on the river Venna. Here he laid the foundations of the city that later on became famous as Karvir. And as the spot was scarcely populated Padmavarna brought in more and more people to inhabit 'Padmavat' as the land was called hereafter. Thus from the above account it seems that the founding of the town of Karvir was part of a systematic attempt at colonisation of the Deccan on the part of the northern tribes, under probably the leadership of the Yadu clan. Anyway our story does not end here. Generations after generations passed and one comes down to the times of Vikadru, Krishna and Jarasandha. Jarasandha had led seventeen campaigns against the Yadavs, in particular against Krishna and Balarama. His express aim was to avenge the death of Kamsa. The Lord of the Magadha was defeated in each of these battles. And now he was again before the defences of Mathura for his eighteenth campaign against Yadu power. His strength was so great and the defences of Mathura were in such a poor state, the morale of the Yadavs so low that elders like Vikadru advised Krishna, the chief cause of the conflict, not to risk a fight as it would bring certain ruin upon Mathura. Following the dictum 'discretion is the best part of valour' Krishna and Balarama left the city and proceeded towards the Sahyadris; particularly towards Karvir, a city which their ancestors had founded. On receiving in-

telligence of their flight, Jarasandha followed in pursuit. Near the outskirts of the city the pair met the ancient sage Parashurama. He advised them not to seek refuge in Karvir as it was under a cruel and ferocious monarch by name of Shrigal. He asked them to accompany him to the Gomantak mountain and from there to launch a vigorous hill-warfare, 'giri-yuddha' agafnst the onrushing hordes of Jarasandha. The two Yadavs accordingly went to Gomantak and routed the Magadha troops completely, Chhedi Raj, a distant relative of theirs, led them to Karvirnagar again after the struggle was over and here they killed Shrigal and enthroned his son Shakradeva on the throne. This story, although it tells as to how the city was established gives no account of how it came to be named Karvir or Kolhapur. That the Karvir- mahatmya does.

In the distant past, Brahma while engaged in Creation produced three 'manasputras', Gaya, Lavana and Kolha. All the three were extremely powerful and became practically invincible through the blessings of their father and also of Shiva. The eldest Gaya and the next Lavana enraged the gods, especially Indra and Yama, and Vishnu with the assistance of other gods killed both of them. However, the gods consented to turn the spots on which they had fallen into tirths, thus we have the Vishnugaya tirth.

The youngest brother Kolha, the monarch of Kolhapur, decided to seek revenge of the death of his brothers, not through war and bloodshed but by dislodging the gods from their positions with the power of his penance. He took to the Kolhagiri hills and followed the austere routine of a tapasvin. His penance increased his strength so much that Brahmadeva decided to lay at his feet the entire Universe. Of course, the gods had their own axe to grind. When Kolhasur left his capital a demon by the

name of Sukeshi had taken over. He was a great enemy of the established religion and freely wrecked the temples and ashrams of the rishis. The gods calculated that once Kolhasur becomes the Lord of the Universe, he would naturally go back to his former capital and kill Sukeshi to establish himself there. And as events proved they were right in their guess, for, Kolhasur when he received the blessings of Brahmadeva, started post-haste for his capital, attacked Sukeshi and slew him after a ferocious struggle. But it was hardly a relief for the gods, because Kolhasur entrusted the administration to Karvir, his eldest son. And this prince was no better than Sukeshi, His natural inclination towards aggression and bloodshed burst into flames of hatred when he learnt that the gods were responsible for the death of his two uncles. He took upon himself the task of seeking retribution, demolished shrines, desecrated Yajnyashalas and slaughtered sages and brahmins. Once again the victims went to Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu, who collected their followers and proceeded to meet Karvir. Karvir was a fighter of great mettle and the battle that ensued was severe. In the end Shiva slew him and in accordance with a promise given to him before his death named the city 'Karvirnagar'. Three other brothers of Karvir also lost their lives in the struggle.

The old giant, Kolhasur, was furious to learn of the fate of his sons. He decided that since Mahalakshmi was the source of all the power and inspiration of the gods, she should somehow be won over first. Shrewd as he was, he practised penance again and when the devi appeared before him in response to his prayers, requested her to quit Kolhapur for a hundred years so that he could humble the gods, The devi had to agree with this request and proceeded to the Himalayas. Kolhasur, now confident of his superiority, ordered his soldiers and followers

to uproot the religion, destroy towns and cities. They carried loot and rapine to all quarters. It fell to the lot of the devas to approach Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva for rescue, who in their turn sought relief through the great goddess. The devi had herself become extremely restive from hearing accounts of the atrocities of Kolhasur, but could do nothing as she had promised him that she would stay away for a period of hundred years. As the period counted down she gradually proceeded in the direction of her abode. At the end of that period she collected a large army of gods, amongst whom counted Ranka Bhairav, Kal-Vetal, Siddha-Batukeshvar and her own sister goddesses like Chamunda. She herself assumed an eighteen armed form, mounted her lion and set against Kolhasur, The Asura, a creature of intrinsic good nature was repentant and when the goddess offered him her blessings, asked for three things. First the spot where he would die should become a tirth. Second the goddess should reside in her original abode as before and the place should be known as Kolhapur after him. Thirdly every year the fruit 'Kohala' should be cut ceremonially in his honour. The goddess said 'tathastu' and gave him 'mukti.'

This is the main story, but not all the tale. There were secondary asurs who fought the gods and secondary gods who slew them. Kolhasur had imprisoned the princesses of the devas, nagas, manavas, whom the goddess freed after the death of the asur. These girls, sixty-four in number became Yoginis. Of the other assistants of the goddess Ujjavalamba slew Raktalola guarding the eastern gate; Katyayani killed Raktbija on the southern gate; on the western gate Raktaksh was slain by Siddha-Batukesh while Raktabhojan on the northern gate was killed by Kedar.

From time to time the demons continued to pester the kshetra but lieutenants of the goddess like Katyayani and Tryambuli managed to quell the troubles. The kshetra was

famous throughout all the seven ages—Kalpas. In the first it was known as Kamagiri and was the abode of Madan, the god of love. In the second it was known as Padmalaya after its ruler Padmaraja. During the third Kalpa, Shiva and Parvati stayed here and it became famous as Shivalaya. The fourth Kalpa saw Brahma ruling the kshetra and it was called Brahmalaya on that count. Kuber ruled the kshetra in the fifth Kalpa and was known as Yakshalaya. Next it became Rakshasalaya after the ruler Sukeshi. The last Kalpa saw Kolhasur in the saddle and then it was known as Rakshasapuri. This account of the mahatmya of Karvir through the ages was related to Yudhishthira, the eldest Pandav.

Panchaganga was the result of the creation of the sages Kashyap, Galav, Gargya, Vashistha and Vishvamitra. After the close of a sacrifice, Brahmadeva found there was no 'mahanadi' in which to perform the 'avabhrit-snana.' The five sages mentioned above, produced with their divine powers the rivers Shiva, Bhadra, Kumbhi, Saraswati and Bhogavati, respectively representing the powers of Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Veda and the last one representing all of them put together. Karvir proper and its vicinity is thus connected with gods and sages from ancient times. It is the permanent abode of Mahalakshmi. Now from mythology to history.

The inscriptional and other records mentioning the Mahalakshmi of Kolhapur enable us to take back the antiquity of the deity at this place to a penod of not earlier than the seventeenth century of our present era. The older parts of the present temple might belong to the tenth century A. D. The earliest known inscriptional reference is from a copper-plate grant made by Amoghavarsha of the Rashtrakuta dynasty in 817 A. D. It was found at Sanjan and states that this Amoghavarsha cut off one of his fingers as an offering to the goddess for bringing peace to his people. Although the relevant verses do not mention

Kolhapur by name, scholars are agreed that the Mahalakshmi mentioned in the plate is none other than that of Kolhapur. Chronologically the next mention is also from a copper-plate grant made by Shashtharaj I of the Kadamba dynasty of Goa, in 998 A. D. In this text it is mentioned that this prince went to Kolhapur and worshipped the Mahalakshmi. The very first record of the Shilaharas of Kolhapur says :

श्रीमहालक्ष्मीलब्धवरप्रसादादिसमस्तराजावली समलंकृत मांडलिक श्रीमारसिंहदेव ।

The title of Mahalakshmilabdhavaraprasad is used by the later Shilaharas as well. Thus, three important dynasties of early medieval Maharashtra, the Rashtrakuts, the Kadambas and the Shilaharas treated Karvirvasini Mahalakshmi as their family goddess. Several subordinates of the Kalyan Chalukyas like Sobhneyya, the governor of Kolhapur and Avararaj, another official of the same dynasty were great devotees of this goddess.

Other epigraphic records mention the grant of lands for the daily worship and other rituals of the goddess. The grants are from various Shilahara and Yadav princes like Bhoja II (1182 A. D.) and Singhana Yadav (1218 A. D.). Numerous other references to the kshetra and the devi are found in medieval inscriptions and also in literary works.

Of the documents from the Maratha period, a majority deals with either grants to the temple or records of fulfilment of vows, navasas. Historically the most important are those papers that show that the goddess had to desert her ancient abode during the Moslem rule. This period seems to be pretty lengthy as a letter from Chhatrapati Sambhaji of the Kolhapur branch (1723 A.D.) states that although several people had risen to power and fame during the Adil Shahi regime none had taken the trouble to restore the goddess which was a refugee in the priests'

house, to her former seat. This means that the goddess had to vacate her place not much after the Moslem rulers invaded the Deccan. Only after the Maratha regime achieved a semblance of stability could she return to her ancient shrine. This reinstitution took place on the Vijayadashmi day of the year 1637 Saka i.e. 26th September 1715. This no doubt was an extremely important event in the history of this land. The triumphal re-entry of the great goddess, the Adi Shakti, into her own house, marks as it were, the close of an era, an era in which the fortunes of the religion had sunk to the lowest ebb. From that date onwards this Adyantrahita, Sarvabhayaprada, Sarvasamshaynashini Mahalakshmi is worshipped and prayed by thousands of devotees without hindrance or break.

Some of the prayers and aratis written and sung for the Mahalakshmi are quoted below—Verses, stotras and aratis—prayers regarding the kshetra and the deity.

1. The following three verses come from the *Karvir-mahatmya* and speak of the greatness of the kshetra. The first part of the first verse is a verse occurring in various texts and the latter half is attached to it in the Mahatmya. The gist of the meaning of the verses is given below.

अयोध्या मथुरा माया काशी कांची अवंतिका ।
पुरीद्वारवती चैव सप्तैता मोक्ष मात्रदा ।।
करवीरं विरूपाक्षं श्रीशैलं पांडुरकं ।
श्रीरंगं सेतुबंधं च भुक्तिमुक्ति प्रदानि षट् ।

Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya, Kashi, Kanchi, Avantika, Dwaraka are the seven places that confer only salvation (on the visitor) while Karvir, Virupaksh, Shrishaila, Pandduranganivas (Pandharpur), Shrirangam and Setu Bandha are the six places that give not only salvation but also bestow the benefits of this material world (on the visitor).

विश्वेशदर्शनं यत्र काशीवासश्च मत्प्रियः ।
स्नानं मणिकर्ण्यां च मत्प्रियं हि वरानने ।

सर्वमेतद्भुवेभूनं करवीरे महापुरे ।
अधिकं चापि भूयो मे महादेव्यां प्रदशनं ।

The poet tells his wife, "Oh lovely faced one, I like to stay at Kashi, for there one could have the darshan of the Vishveshvar and could take a bath in the Manikarnika tirth, but in this great Karvir, in addition to the above two one has the good fortune of having the darshan of the great goddess."

3. कामदं हि सकामानां निष्कामानां च मोक्षदं ।
नान्यदृष्टं मया क्षेत्रं करवीरपुरं विना ।।

I have never seen a place parallel to Karvir which fulfils any desires one may have and which confers Moksha on those who have no worldly desires left.

4. The following stotra, praise of the devi, is composed by the sage Parashar when he visited the Karvir-kshetra. This follows a very common pattern. The visitor or devotee that is, in this case Parashar, who represents a religious minded person, is aware of the shortcomings and the worries of this material world, or even is fed up with it (संसारभयभीतोऽस्मि) but his sole hope is the great goddess who is merciful and who is bound to come to his rescue and assure him of Moksha. Praise be on this goddess.

नमाम्यहं देवि परां पवित्रां जगत्कृतिस्थाननिरोधसंभवाम्
भुक्ति प्रदामज्ञकुलस्य सर्वदा मुक्तिप्रदा प्राज्ञकुलस्य सर्वतः ।। १ ।।
तव प्रभावं सुनिरूपितुं शुभे पराक्रमं वा न हि देववृन्दं
अलं प्रसीदेश्वरि सर्वदेहिनां कामप्रदा त्वं भव सर्वकामिनां ।। २ ।।
नूनं स्थित्वा त्वं करवीरके पुरे मुक्ति प्रदातु खलु सर्वदेहिनां
तथापि याचे भवतीं दुरार्तिहां मनोरथं सुंदरि पूरयाशु मे ।। ३ ।।
या वैरिणां वितनुते भवती विमुक्तिं सा किं ददाति न हि सज्जनभक्तवृन्दं ।
सर्वात्मना तव पदाब्जकथासु तृप्ते भृंगे भवच्चरणपंकजवासदक्षे ।। ४ ।।
धन्योऽस्मि कृतकृत्योऽस्मि तव पादाब्जदर्शनात्
संसारभयभीतोऽस्मि पाहि मां सर्वशर्मदे ।। ५ ।।
सुदिनं चाद्य संजातमाप्तं जन्म फलं मया
मातस्त्वद्दर्शनादेव जातः सर्वं मनोरथः ।। ६ ।।

न याचे वरमन्यं हि पूर्णचंद्रनिभानने ।
त्वत्क्षेत्रवसतिं देहि सर्वकामप्रपूरिणीं ।। ७ ।।

5. The eight-verse stotra given below is by the sage Agasti. The Karvir-mahatmya assures us that whosoever recites these eight verses would receive salvation, his worries would vanish and his desires fulfilled. Thus:

महालक्ष्म्यष्टकं पुण्यं यः पठेद्भुक्तिमुक्तिदं ।
दुःखदारिद्र्यनिर्मुक्तः सर्वान्कामानवाप्नुयात् ।।

The stotra itself is a compendium of all the ideas current regarding the devi. The first stanza describes her as having the Shankh, Chakra, Gada in her hands thereby indicating that she is the wife of Vishnu. The next verse states that the goddess is the giver of the benefits of this and the other world as well. In the third one her various names, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Brahmi etc. are mentioned. The verses following this one contain the usual adjectives attached to all the deities such as merciful, benefactor of the devotee etc. The text of the stotra as quoted by the Karvir-Mahatmya is as follows:

नमस्तेऽस्तु महामाये श्रीपीठे सूरपूजिते ।
शंखचक्रगदाहस्ते महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तु ते ।। १ ।।

सिद्धिबुद्धिप्रदे देवि भुक्तिमुक्ति प्रदायिनी ।
मंत्रमूर्ति सदानंदे महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तु ते ।। २ ।।

नमस्ते गरुडारूढे कोलासुरभयंकरि ।
कौमारि वैष्णवी ब्राह्मी महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तु ते ।। ३ ।।

श्वेतांबरधरे देवि रत्नाभरणभूषिते ।
जगत्प्रिये जगन्नाथे महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तु ते ।। ४ ।।

स्थूलसूक्ष्मे महारौद्रे महाशांते महोदये
महापापहरे देवि महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तु ते ।। ५ ।।

पद्मासनस्थिते देवि परब्रह्मस्वरूपिणी ।
परमहस्ते जगत्पूज्ये महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तु ते ।। ६ ।।

सर्वेशे सर्व वरदे सर्वदुःखविनाशिनी ।
सर्वाघौघहरे देवि महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ ७ ॥
आद्यंतरहिते देवि ह्यादिशक्ते खगोचरे ।
योगिनीयोगसंभूते महाकाशि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ ८ ॥

6. Another stotra by the same Agasti, is the Name-stotra. In this stotra, as the name indicates the various names of or the adjectives or attributes of the devi are given.

ॐकार रूपिणी लक्ष्मी विष्णोर्हृदयसंस्थिता
विश्वांगनंदिनी नंदा नंदाक्षी बिंदुरूपिणी ॥ १ ॥
हस्तिनी पद्मिनी चक्रा सुताम्र-कमलाक्षिणी
विष्णुशक्तिरितिख्याता स्वानंदशक्तिरूपिणी ॥ २ ॥
चतुःषष्ठीसुपीठस्था कोटिचंद्रसमप्रभा
आद्यंतरहिता शक्तिर्मालिनी मंत्रयोगिनी ॥ ३ ॥
ब्रह्मांडकोटिसंयुक्ता वाराहि हंसवाहिनी
नादबिंदुकलाशक्तियोंगिहृत्स्थानसंस्थिता ॥ ४ ॥
शास्त्रस्थाना उमा पद्मा पद्माक्षी ज्वालशोभिता
ज्वालाज्वलनदीक्षांता महादेव्यतिसुप्रभा ॥ ५ ॥
सूर्यकोटिप्रताकाशा चंद्रकोटिसुशीतला
सर्वमूर्तिकलासूक्ष्मा ब्रह्मरूपव्यवस्थिता ॥ ६ ॥
अकारोब्रह्मणोरूपमुकारो विष्णुरेवच
मकारं रुद्रमित्याहुरेता प्रणवदेवताः ॥ ७ ॥
ओंकारे संस्थितं चापि तथा शक्तित्रयं विदुः ।
ओंकारो ध्यायते येन सर्वपापैः समुच्यते ॥ ८ ॥

The following two are aratis sung in praise of the goddess. Their main interest is that they mention some iconographical details of the devi image. In the first one mention has been made of her vahan which is a lion, then of the cobra-hood on her head, and the pan-patra or bowl, shield in her hands. The rest of the poem contains the most commonplace adjectives. In the second arati mention is made of the Matuling, Gada, Khetaka or shield,

and the bowl in her hands, and the rest is the usual praise consisting of attributes and tributes to the goddess.

7. जय देवि जय देवि जय मातः कमले द्रुतजांबूनदविमले सुरनुतपदकमले ।।
अलिकुलकोमलवाले धृतमौक्तिक माले स्तनयुगनिर्जिततालें क्षीरांबुधिबाले
काश्मीरांकितभाले नाशितभवजाले हेलामर्दितकोले शरणागतपाले ।। १ ।।
कमलदलायतनयन शशिनिभशुभवदने सिंहविराजितगमने हीरावलीरुदने
मुनिजनविरचितनमने कृतरसिसकदने कोकिलमंजुलगदने विष्णूरःसदने ।।२।।
नागाद्यंकितमस्तकभुवनावनसक्ते प्राशनभाजनखेटादिकयुतकरयुक्ते
कृतकरवीरनिवासे रिपुमर्दनशक्ते शुकनासासमनासे तारितनिजभक्ते ।। ३ ।।
अधरविनिर्जितबिंबे विश्वस्तुतरूपे पृथुतरचारुनितंबे कृतदानवकोपे
भ्रूजितमन्मथचापे हृतनिजजनतापे हृज्ज्योतिर्वित्त्वां प्रणमति हृतपापे ।।४।।

8. जय देवी जय देवी जय महालक्ष्मी
वससी व्यापकरूपे तू स्थूलसूक्ष्मी ।।

करविरपुरवासिनी सुरवरमुनिमाता
पुरहरवरदायिनी मुरहरप्रियकांता
कवलाकारें जठरी जन्मविला धाता
सहस्रवदनीं भूधर न पुरे गुण गाता ।। १ ।।

मातुर्लिंग गदा खेटक रविकिरणीं
झळके हाटक वाटी पीयुषरसपाणी
माणिकरसना सुरंगवसना मृगनयनी
शशिकरवदना राजस मदनाची जननी ।। २ ।।

तारा शक्ति अगम्या शिवभजकां गौरी
सांख्य म्हणती प्रकृती निर्गुण निर्धारी
गायत्री निजबीजा निगमागम सारी
प्रकटे पद्मावती निजधर्माचारी ।। ३ ।।

अमृतभरिते सरिते अधदुरिते वारीं
मारी दुर्घट असुरां भव दुस्तर तारीं
वारी मायापटल प्रणमत परिवारीं
हे रुप विद्रुप तद्रुप दावी निर्धारीं ।। ४ ।।

चतुरानने कुश्चितकर्माच्या ओळी
लिहिल्या असतिल माते माझे निजभाळीं
पुसोनि चरणातळीं पदसुमनें क्षाळीं
मुक्तेश्वर नागर क्षीरसागरबाळी ।। ५ ।।

TULJAPUR

BHAVANI

THE temple is situated on a very peculiar site. It is located on one of the deep slopes on the ranges of the Bala Ghat. As one enters from the gateway one has to descend nearly some fifteen feet to reach the first stage of the temple prakara. This stage consists mainly of the large tank known as the Kallola tirth. After the construction of the nivas of the devi was over. Vishvakarma took leave of Brahmadeva on whose command he had come down to the Yamunachala to build it. Brahmadeva decided to create the tirths necessary for any kshetra. He then invited all the well known and holy waters on this earth to come to the Yamunachala. The response to the invitation was immediate, and every source of holy water that existed on the surface of the earth and below it rushed to the spot. Ganga, Yamuna, Sarasvati all obeyed the command. Various other tirths from the Himalayas, Vindhyas, Sahyadris, Trikut and Malay mountains flocked together. There was a tumultuous assemblage of all these and on account of the furore created by them Brahmadeva named it 'Kallola tirth'. The power of the tirth is so great that even its very darshan is capable of destroying sin. A bath in the tirth is the first rite to be performed by a pilgrim. The tank is walled off from all sides and entrance into the enclosure is only on payment of a fixed charge. Steps lead down to the water making it easier to take a bath in it. A dip in this tirth during the month of Magha is the giver of great good. The *Tulajamahatmya* states that apart from sins, various diseases are cured by this water. This tirth is a large rectangular reservoir

forty feet by twenty and is most probably a fourteenth century construction. On one side of the tirth are a number of aisles now used for residential purposes. From the other side, that is, the northern sids a flight of steps leads down another fifteen feet taking the visitor down to the second stage of the Prakara. This is crowded with various tirths and some subsidiary shrines. The point that attracts immediate attention is the 'Gomukh tirth'. Here a stream of water is constantly falling down some six feet from the Gomukh, a stone image of a cow's head. This flow of water comes from the Mankavati tirth, as is evident from the fact that when the latter dries up due to scarcity of rains, the former also dries up. However, the local tale is quite different. The water flowing down from the Gomukh is Ganga herself. Once there came a mendicant belonging to the Nath sampradaya. His name was Garibanath. He was rather an unbelieving type of soul and not paying any attention to the local elders decided to go to the Ganges to enjoy real Ganga-snana. When the devi saw that her devotees had failed to convince him she herself appeared before him and tried to show him that this indeed was water from the Ganga. But the man was in no mood to accept even the divine explanations. He however, agreed in the end to carry with him a stick and a lemon fruit to the Ganges and drop them in the water there. Walking down all the way to the Ganges, the sadhu performed all the rites at the tirth, got the satisfaction he longed for and then remembering the devi's words rather sceptically threw the stick and lemon in the river. The man returned to Tuljapur in due course and when, following the usual custom stood below the Gomukh to bathe in the downpour, he saw the stick and the lemon coming out of the Gomukh. This at last convinced him that the water pouring forth from the Gomukh was in fact Ganges water. The Mahatmya calls

it the 'Dhara-tirth', and says that it consists of the three waters, that of Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati.

Along the same line are other tirths. These are in the nature of small tanks or wells and recently cupola-like structures have been erected to cover them. Inscribed plates indicate which tirth is what. A guardian or upadhyaya is sitting near each of these tirths and guides the visitor about the rites to be performed at each. There are the Ganeshtirth, the Amrit-kund, also known as the Sudha-kund. The whole assemblage of these tirths is kept remarkably clean and tidy. Near them are small shrines to some deities like Siddhivinayak, Vitthal, Dattatreya etc. Then to the east of the Gomukh tirth, but outside the precincts of the temple courtyard is the Mankavati tirth or the Vishnu tirth. This is a huge reservoir, resembling a step-well. The arched construction of the aisles around it showing that it is a building of the late Maratha period.

Leaving these tirths and secondary shrines, and proceeding towards the west, the visitor finds on his either side shops that offer for sale flowers, kumkum, halad and other substances offered to the deity. Then a large gateway faces him. This is a combined arch and trebeate construction. Crossing the gate one has to descend a set of some more steps before one enters the final and the lowermost level of the three phased prakara. This courtyard is much larger than the previous one and is enclosed within pillared aisles on all sides. The chief shrine is a series of some four buildings oriented towards the east. The easternmost part contains the shrine of Shri Siddheshvar Mahadev. Next to it is the homa-kund. Then comes the sabhamandap. This is square on plan, with a cross shaped constructional pattern. The pillars are of the Yadav Order, and beams and several other parts are profusely carved, unlike the inner parts of the temple and the pillars of the aisles. However, the arrangement of the pillars and the carvings on the stone

betray the fact that it is a reconstruction from older materials. Stones have been put together without paying any attention to considerations of symmetry or the continuation of the designs carved on them. In addition to this unartistic arrangement the matter is further worsened by the colour decoration now applied to the structure. Bright and deep hues have been applied without caring for the balance of colours and the harmony of tones used. It is from this mandap, which has three entrances, the eastern side being blocked off by the homa-kund, that the visitor who has come only to have darshan can have a look at the image. The western door opens in the central mandap, the southern and northern ones opening in the courtyard. Only if the visitor has anything to offer in terms of money is he allowed inside the central mandap and have a closer look at the devi. There is a good deal of rush, and two doors intervene, the image is surrounded by those who are out to present valuable offerings and this arrangement of having darshan is to say the least, unsatisfactory. It is in this mandap that certain rites such as cropping the first locks of an infant—'*Javal*', etc. are performed in fulfilment of *navas*. This adds another element to the already thick crowds in the mandap.

The second or central mandap is similar in construction to the first one, although the impression of disorder is absent from this building. This mandap has also four openings natural to a cross-planned construction, the southern one opening in the courtyard, the eastern one leading to the outer mandap and the western to the garbhagriha. On the northern side is a room known as the Shejaghar or bedroom of the goddess. The garbhagriha is square on plan and is surmounted by a superb stucco shikhar of the best Maratha style. Pyramidal in aspect it is built in four storeys, each of a slightly diminishing height. Each tier is formed

by arched niches in which numerous stucco figures are placed. The lowermost storey, that is the one immediately above the cornice is ornamented with large stucco figures of elephant riders. The whole is surmounted by two 'amalakas' domical in shape. The finial is the golden 'kalash' donated by one Thigale from Bid some hundred years ago. The dimensions and proportions of the various components of the shikhar structure are so arranged to make it an elegant specimen of Maratha temple architecture. The *Mahatmya* attributes the construction of this 'prasada', the palatial dwelling of the devi to Vishvakarma, the divine architect. As reality stands Vishvakarma cannot claim to have fathered the present shrine; nor was Brahmadeva the patron under whose instructions it was built. Not more than two hundred years have passed since the time when some local craftsman inspired by some Hindu chieftain, brought off this renovation of a medieval shrine from the ruins to which it was reduced.

In the garbhagriha is the image of the devi variously known as Tvarita, Turaja, Tulaja, Bhavani and Amba. This is a stone image about three feet in height, of black polished stone. The devi has eight arms and they carry various ayudhas in the following order. The lowermost right hand holds a trident, the next one a dagger, the one above this an arrow and the uppermost right hand wields the chakra, In the uppermost left hand is a shankh, next is a bow, the third one carries a bowl and the lower-most left hand holds the knot of hair on the head of the asur. The right leg is planted firmly on the body of Mahishasur, the left one is on the ground, between the two is the head of the asur gripped by the lower left arm. The vahan of the devi is a lion, and on the backrest are carved the sun and the moon on the left and right sides of the devi. To her left is an image of a tapasvin; head touching the

ground and legs pointing towards the sky. This is a representation of Anubhuti, a woman tapasvini who was responsible for bringing Tvarita devi on this Yamunachal. On the head rests a crown that has a yoni and ling carved on it. Ornaments like earrings, kundalas, necklaces etc. are carved on the image. This image is supposed to be 'swayambhu'—selfborn, created without the medium of human agency. However from the nature of the sculptural characteristics experts assign the late seventeenth or eighteenth century as the period of its carving. The Mahalakshmi of Kolhapur and Vitthal of Pandharpur had been kept in hiding during the days of Moslem rule to escape desecration. However, it is clear from the records that the Bhavani of Tuljapur was not so fortunate. *Sabhasad Bakhar*, a Marathi chronicle of the life and times of Chhatrapati Shivaji, written during the last quarter of the seventeenth century is considered to be a reliable source of historical information by most scholars. This *Bakhar*, contains the following information regarding the devi of Tuljapur:

"The armies collected together and the march started. Tuljapur was the next halt. Here the troops encamped. Shri Bhavani was the family deity of the Maharaja (Chhatrapati Shivaji) and was on that count broken to pieces. The pieces were powdered in a quern." The chronicle further adds that an heavenly voice immediately pierced the atmosphere and told Afzal Khan that he would be dead within three weeks.

The incident is connected with the campaign started by the Adil Shahi general Afzal Khan against Shivaji in 1659. This was the beginning of the adventurous career of the great Maratha leader and Afzal Khan had publicly boasted that he would bring back to Bijapur Shivaji, dead or alive! And in order to terrorise the Maratha

leader and his followers he embarked on a course of purposeful destruction and rapine. Contemporary ballads, especially one composed by a well known poet Ajnyandas, state that the Khan had desecrated not only the Bhavani of Tuljapur, but also the deities at Pandharpur, Pali and Aundh. The ballad by Ajnyandas also states that the Khan erected a mosque on the spot where the temple stood. If this was so, it seems that during subsequent years this mosque was removed by someone and the devi re-established in her ancient abode, as there is no trace whatever of any mosque-like structure around the temple courtyard. The immediate punishment the Khan received—he was killed in his encounter with Shivaji within a fortnight of these atrocities—led people to believe that this Kulaswamini of the Chhatrapati was a 'jagrit' or vigilant and live deity. Her aspect is of the ferocious or raudra type and the mythological legends that tell of how the goddess came here depict her as a ferocious goddess ready to take reprisals against those who troubled her or her devotees. Legendary accounts and the verses from the pen of Swami Ramadas who was an ardent devotee of the goddess, make it clear that in view of the great insecurity at Tuljapur the devi was removed to the Pratapagad fort. It says:

तुळजापूर ठाकेना । चालली पश्चिमेकडे ।
पारघाटी जगन्माता । सद्य येऊनि राहीली ।।

As the date of this verse is uncertain the reference may mean two things, either that the original old image was removed from Tuljapur to Parghat before the atrocities of Afzal Khan or that a new image was established as a replica of the Bhavani of Tuljapur.

The image might be new or old, but the pith is ancient. There can be no doubt on that count. A brief perusal of the known historical records show that the earliest reference

to the goddess is from a copper plate grant of 1204 A.D. This plate refers to the goddess as Tukai, but the name of the kshetra is unmistakable—Tuljapur. The next known record comes from a small village named Kati in the Osmanabad district itself. It is dated 1398 A.D. This inscription records the donations of some presents by one Parashurama to the great Tulja-mata. There is a story in the *Gurucharitra* relating to the life of Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati that a person had been staying at Tuljapur to obtain relief from a malady, but the goddess appeared before him and directed him to proceed to Ganagapur. where he would be cured. Some scholars date the *Gurucharitra* to the early sixteenth century and Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati's lifetime to the first half of the fifteenth century. This reference shows that the kshetra of the goddess was even then treated as a very important religious centre, Gunakriti, a Jaina author in his work Dharmamrit (1592 A.D.) has discussed the good and bad tirths and kshetras. The good tirths are, of course, those of the Jaina sect, various shrines of this or that tirthankaras. And amongst those that are dubbed as 'kutirths' or evils centres are Pandharpur, Tuljapur—the two foremost kshetras of Hinduism. This is an obvious indication of the importance enjoyed by the kshetras even then.

From 1650 A.D. onwards there are numerous records that mention the goddess Bhavani and the kshetra Tuljapur. Most of these are letters or grants made by Maratha noble-men to the goddess. Some are grants made by members of the Bhosale dynasty. There are papers showing various inam grants made by the Bhosales of Kolhapur to the goddess. It is a notable feature of these sanads that they always refer to the Bhavani as the Kulaswamini of their family and state that it is an 'anadi' kshetra of the jagrit devi. A very large majority of the available papers are in connection with the fulfilment of

vows or *navasas* taken by the various people before the devi. The most important and revealing of these is one from 1760 A.D. This is the year in which the Peshwas were called upon to face the threat from Ahmed Shah Abdali, the Afghan leader. It had already become clear that the danger was extremely formidable, and it was decided by the Peshwas to invoke the aid of divine power in addition to the great human effort they were putting up. It was only in the fitness of things that the Peshwas should have turned at this critical moment to the goddess Bhavani of Tuljapur who had so consistenly supported the founder of the kingdom they ruled. She was the Kulaswamini of the ruling dynasty and as such of the entire nation. And it was quite natural that in a national crisis it should be to her that people should turn. The Peshwas decided to make some grants to defray the costs of some additional daily rituals they planned to start. Thus the government was to undertake the expenses of the daily worship, naivedya and the nandadipa—lighting in the garbhagriha. Arrangements were made to start the Chaughada. It was also decided to improve the management of the funds already allocated to temple service and to enforce partial prohibition, as there was too much wine flowing around the tirth under the name of prasad. However, this time the goddess did not favour the devotees as before. The Peshwas received a heavy blow at Panipat. In later times several devotees have continued to make various grants and presents to the goddess.

The area of the kshetra is not limited within the enclosure. In the aisles around the temple are some stray images like Nrisimha, Yamai, Lakshmi-Narayan, Khandoba etc. In the north-east corner is the temple of Matangi devi which is supposed to be the shakti of the Bhavani. To the west of this temple is the Matang kund. The pujaris of this shrine are Mahar by caste. The *Mahatmya* states that

Bhavani herself took the form of Matangi. It was because of the atrocities of an asur named Matang. He was a powerful person and indulged most freely in warfare and desecration. He defeated and slew numerous kings, looted their treasures and abducted their wives and daughters, he burnt down several ashrams and slaughtered the sages and mendicants that stayed there. Cows were slaughtered by the scores, sacrificial altars destroyed and temples were demolished. The gods also could not escape the grim fate and ultimately had to go to Brahmadeva to seek relief. Brahmadeva gave them a hearing but in the end expressed his inability to do anything in the matter and advised them to approach Amba. They accordingly went to Amba and after pleasing her with prayers and worships, told her their grievance. The goddess became furious with rage to learn of the behaviour of the demon and declared then and there that she would kill the demon shortly. She advised the deputation to return to their respective abodes. Then she got upon her lion, armed herself to the teeth and went out to seek the asur. Matang had meanwhile heard of the devi's advance, gathered together his victorious army consisting of horse, chariot, elephant and foot soldiers and seated himself on a giant chariot. Thus battleready, he went to confront the goddess. After a fierce struggle in which the devi had ultimately to call out other Shaktis like Vaishnavi, Varahi, Brahmi etc. the demon was killed. Amba then praised her shakti who had killed Matang and told her that she would henceforth be known as Matangi.

Some distance off from the shrine is a temple-like structure. It houses a big boulder known at Ghat-Shila. This ghat-shila is sanctified by an incident in the life of Ramachandra. When he was moving through the Dandakaranya in search of Sita, Amba met him. According to a legend locally current but not mentioned in the *Mahatmya* she appeared before Rama in the form of Sita. She had

decided to make some fun of the prince. But no sooner had she appeared than Rama recognised her true nature and kneeled before her to ask for her blessings. Either in her own form or in that of Sita, the devi seeing Rama is the most important point, An account of their meeting is given later on in connection with the legend about how and why the devi came to this spot. But when they met the devi she herself and the two brothers rested on this rock and hence its sacredness. Just near by are two Shiva lings, Rameshvar and Lakshmaneshvar, established by the two brothers to please the goddess. The Papavinashi tirth is not far from the temple. This is a well built tank, with pillared aisles on its sides. Further down is another temple dedicated to Ramavardayini devi. This is the devi that gave her blessings to Rama who was searching for his wife. The image is eight-armed like the one of Bhavani.

This kshetra has certain adjuncts in the form of some maths or monasteries. These are considered to be quite important in the composition of the tirth, as most of the mahantas or founders of these maths were famous devotees of the devi. The most well known of them is the math of Ranachhoda Bharati. This Ranachhoda Baba was supposed to be an incarnation of Shiva and even today the belief is current that the devi goes to this math to play chequers with the mahanta; she returns to the temple only at the time of the worship. And to let her know that it was time for worship an announcer shouts out in the direction of the math 'the priests have come, please come down.' This custom came in existence because it so happened that for two consecutive days the devi got so much engrossed in her game she forgot to arrive in her temple at the time of the puja and naivedya. She immediately took the priest to task for not serving her properly, but he politely pointed out that the fault lay in the other direction. The devi then suggested that she should be daily called when the time

was up. The math next in importance is that of Garibnath Baba. This was the same Garibnath that discovered that it was Ganges water that was pouring down from the Gomukh tirth. The devi did not like that she had to convince somebody like this and asked Garibnath never to come and meet her. Darshan was forbidden for him. The poor man begged for mercy, said that he repented having distrusted the devi's words and pleaded with the devi not to prevent him from having her darshan. All this pleading led to a concession and the goddess permitted him to go to the temple and have her darshan—but only once a year. And this tradition continues to this day. The present occupant of the chair in the math goes out only once a year. This day is the last day of Ashvin. The math itself has the images of one 'Ingalaj Devi' and of the ten incarnations. There also are seen the replica of the Bhavani image and busts of Garibnath and his disciples.

The Bhavani happens to be the kula-devata, the family deity of numerous families of Maharashtra; the most important of which was the family of the Bhosales to which Chhatrapati Shivaji belonged. It is a common custom among these families to visit the place for the darshan of the devi after some auspicious occasion like child birth or marriage. It will be recalled that a similar custom is in existence in relation to the Mahalakshmi at Kolhapur. Several types of vows are taken by the devotees before the goddess. There is no rule as to how the goddess should be satisfied. People come and ask for anything, for the cure of a disease, for averting some divine or supernatural curse, for begetting children, for proper marriage relationships and so on. As stated before, this devi is known to be jagrit and hence is an object of Sakama-bhakti. Filling of the lap of the devi, the shearing of the locks of an infant, presentation of floral garments etc. are common forms. Some methods peculiar to this place are as follows. Till

some hundred and fifty years ago, the slaughter of animals and drinking of liquor in the name of the goddess were quite common practices. But now these practices have fallen into disuse. To become a member of the Sampradaya of the devi, to signify one's entry into this sect one has to wear a pota, a cotton torch, a bamboo basket and a garland of Kavadis. Another method is known as Bhade. An earthen pot is broken in two, in one part a handful of rice grains are put and upon this a lamp is lighted. The devotee who has to fulfil the navas takes this part on his head and goes to take the darshan of the devi. Then there is the 'dandavat'. The person starts from the place where he is staying and goes to the temple, laying himself prostrate after some five steps. A similar rite is performed while circumambulating the shrine instead. Married women sprinkle kumkum in the entire courtyard of the temple and inside it. In the performances of most of the rites the services of the upadhyayas of the temple are necessary and the devotee has to pay fixed charges for particular rites he wants to perform. The lowest rate for filling of the lap starts with a rupee and quarter and goes up to twenty-five rupees for the normal modes.

The village of Tuljapur is in the Osmanabad district and lies on the bus-route connecting Sholapur and Osmanabad. From both these places hourly bus services are available. It takes about one and a quarter hour to reach Tuljapur from Sholapur and about one hour to go to that place from Osmanabad. Direct bus services link the place with some of the railway stations like Yedshi on the Kurduwadi-Latur branch line of the Central Railways. If a visitor merely intends to go for the darshan of the goddess, he could go and return the same day from any of the two big district places mentioned earlier. But even if he wishes to stay at the kshetra very good arrangements exist. The most commonplace arrangement,

of course, is that provided for by the upadhyayas of the kshetra. There is a large number of these upadhyayas at this place and the notable point regarding these upadhyayas is that they belong to all the castes and hence persons from various communities would find hosts belonging to their own community to welcome them. They not only play host to the visitor but are useful otherwise also. They take him round the kshetra explaining to him the legendary importance of each of the numerous shrines there and assist him in whatever rites he wants to perform at the kshetra. As far as rites in the main temple are concerned the rates are fixed by the managing committee and displayed publicly on a board for the convenience of the pilgrims. The local municipality has recently erected a resthouse for the benefit of the passengers. Those who want to visit the shrine but are perhaps reluctant to utilise the services of the kshetropadhyayas would definitely like this place. It is immediately opposite the bus-stand. The building is quite decent and rooms are let out for a nominal charge of one rupee for twenty-four hours. There are some that would cost only eight annas for the same period. However, the boarding facilities are not as satisfactory as those of lodging; specially for those who stay in the rest-house. The standard of cleanliness of the places providing food and edibles is not quite up to the mark. The town is otherwise quite neat and tidy with roads paved with concrete and lighting provided by electricity.

Not quite unlike the Vaghes at Jejuri and the Varkaris of Pandharpur there are the Bhutes at this place. They are the bhakts or devotees of the devi tied together in a well knit sect. The members of this sect have a typical dress, consisting of an angarkha or long flowing shirt, a cap studded with Kavadis and carry a torch with them. Their occupation is singing devotional songs relating to

the devi to the tune of tuntune, tal and sambal; and moving from place to place to beg in the name of the devi. These bhutes like the Vasudevas were a cultural institution in Hindu society and they were entrusted with the task of taking to the farthest corner of the society the bhakti of the deities. They are also known as Bhopes. The Gondhalis are another class of people associated with the Bhavani. 'The Gondhalis are a class of religious minstrels recruited from among many castes. The Gondhalis make their living chiefly by performing the Gondhal dance. They beg in the name of the goddess Bhavani and sing songs historical and religious.' The Gondhal dance is performed to the tune of the sambal, tal and tuntune and begins with an invocation to various gods to attend the Gondhal. This list consists of the names of all the important deities of the region and one cannot help thinking that this list was of an essentially informative nature. Then follow several prayers and devotional songs addressed to the goddess. All along torches are kept constantly burning, ghee being continuously poured on them. It is a common custom amongst many families to perform this Gondhal through the Gondhalis after a marriage or a maunji-bandhan ceremony. These Gondhalis originally used to sing of mythological heros, but in later times, especially the Maratha period, they started singing obout the exploits of living persons as well. Those in whose name the 'danka' or drum was beaten were considered highly honoured. The Gondhalis also became famous as ballad singers and in the lalits and tamashas they played no unimportant part. However, they were originally the devotees of the devi and continue to play that role even today.

Unlike the other shrines of Maharashtra, the devi is supposed to be asleep during certain periods of the year. These periods are not quite extensive nor are they too

many in number. The first period of rest is of seven days, from the eighth day of the second or vadya fortinght of the month of Bhadrapad to the last day or no moon day of the same month. The next recess is during the next month and is shorter than the first. It is of only four days. From the eleventh day of the first fortnight to the full-moon day of the month of Ashvin the devi is asleep. The third period of rest is during the month of Pausha. This rest is for seven days, from the first day of the month of Pausha to the eighth. But for these eighteen days the devi is supposed to be constantly awake. Before and after each 'nidra' or rest session a goat is sacrificed before the goddess. There is no smaller replica or utsava-murti in this temple and as such, it is the main image itself that is rested. Near the central mandap there is the devi's bed-room. Here a luxurious bed-stead, with a good deal of ivory work on it, is placed. This was presented to the deity by the Kolhapur prince. The image is placed in a reclining position on this bed-stead during the rest periods. Darshan is not prohibited during the nidra, although no other rites are performed.

The daily worship takes place in four separate sessions. The first is in the early morning when the priests wipe the face and the feet of the goddess with a wet cloth. Then this cloth is squeezed and the drops of water that come out of it are distributed as tirth to those present. Immediately after this wash the devi is served with a breakfast consisting of bread and some vegetables. The afternoon worship is the main puja and is of sixteen upacharas including 'panchamrita snana'. For this snana pots full of curds, milk and other substances constituting the panchamrita are emptied on the image. Then the image is washed with clean water. Sandal-paste is applied on the forehead, kumkum and halad follow. The arati and mahanaivedya follow this. In the

evening, arati with incense is the main feature, and the late evening worship is known a Prakshalana-puja. After every worship the goddess is decked out in new clothes and ornaments. This routine is altered on certain days of the year when the alamkara-mahapuja is performed. The Gudi Padva (Chaitra), Shiral-shashthi (Shravan), Lalita-panchmi (Ashvin), Bali-pratipada (Kartika), Makara-samkrant (Pausha), and Ratha-saptami (Magha) are some of the days that occasion the alamkara-mahapuja. On these days the best of the garments of the goddess and numerous ornaments are placed on the image. The whole make up is most artistically arranged. The ornaments that the shrine has are of numerous varieties and as such each occasion of such an alamkara-mahapuja is worth seeing. If any visitor to the shrine wishes to witness this alamkara-mahapuja on days other than those mentioned above, he has to pay extra charges. The rates for these pujas begin with one rupee and go up to ten and there are five types of pujas which are normally exhibited for the visitor. Many of these ornaments have been presented to the deity by the Bhosales and the Peshwas.

The other routine feature of the temple rituals is the Chhabina or procession. This is not unlike the palanquin processions at other places. It is taken out on each Tuesday, then the last two days of the first or Shuddha fortnight and the first day of the second or vadya fortnight of every month. In addition, the first nine days of Ashvin, that is, during the Nava-ratra festival and the seven days from eighth to the fifteenth of the first half of Pausha, the Chhabina is taken out. The procession starts immediately after the evening puja is over. The image is placed in an 'ambari' and that ambari is placed on some of the vahans of the devi. There is a band of musicians to lead it. A number of Bhutes and Gondhalis accompany it and the shouts of Ude, Ude, Ambabaicha Ude, fill

the atmosphere. During the days when the devi is asleep the procession is not taken out nor on the full-moon day of the month of Phalgun.

Although a good many festivals are observed here and each attracts a large crowd, the nava-ratra and the vijayadashmi are the most important celebrations. The devi is awakened on the early morning of the first day of the month of Ashvin, and is seated on the pedestal. A potter brings some three earthen pots, 'ghats', to the temple and keeps them near the Gomuhk tirth. The priests and other sevaks gather there and take these ghats to the temple to the tune of music. These ghats are then placed at fixed spots—ceremonially established. One is placed in the sabhamandap or the outer mandap, the other in the Shiva shrine in front of the devi shrine and the third one in front of the Matangi devi. After this, there takes place the recitation of the Saptashati stotra and the homa. On the eighth and ninth days, ashtami and navami, a sacrifice at which a goat is killed is performed. This is known as 'Khadga-navami'. The homa and the sacrificial rituals take place in the altar or kund that is constructed in front of the sabhamandap and immediately behind the Shiva shrine. On each evening the chhabina of the devi is taken out, the vahan of the devi being different each day. The vahans are made of wood and are, lion, horse, peacock, nandi, garuda etc. It would be noted that these are the vahans of various deities like Brahmadeva, Skanda, Shiva, Vishnu etc. and indicate that they—that is, the other deities—are nothing else than the various aspects—rupas—of the goddess Jagadamba.

The Vijayadashmi attracts the biggest fair of the year. Early morning that day a palanquin is brought before the temple. This palanquin is brought all the way from Nagar and Bhingar by the members of the Teli community. The leader of the bearers goes in the shrine, cuts his small

finger and applies a 'tilak' of blood on the forehead of the goddess, the afternoon puja being a grand alamkara mahapuja. But the focus of all attention is the evening procession of Simmollanghan, the traditional crossing of the boundaries. The devi is placed in the palanquin brought to her in the morning. The rush is so terrific and so many people try to push forward to touch the palanquin that as a precautionary measure yards of cloth are wound round the image to protect it from any possible harm. A deafening noise ensues from the combined efforts of several bands of musicians that employ such vociferous instruments as nagara, tasha, sambal, karna and shinga. Cheers of 'Ude, Ude' vie with the instruments, and it is difficult to say which was louder. Numberless torches are set alight. Large quantities of kumkum powder are thrown on or towards the palanquin. Every face is soon powdered red. The sight and the entire atmosphere is memorable. The bands blaring out, the thunder of Ude, the smoky torches crackling out and the red dust, all create an effect at once unusual and exciting. The route of the procession is not too long, the usual path of circumambulation being followed. The procession comes to a halt near the huge banyan tree where the palanquin is rested for some time. People try to reach the deity so as to prsesent to the devi the customary 'gold', the leaves of the Shami tree. It is not before midnight that the tumultous chhabina returns to the shrine. On return, the devi, who is naturally tired after meeting so many thousands of her devotees, during the past ten days, is taken out of the palanquin and placed on the bed-stead brought by the Bhingar devotees with them. This is the beginning of the second period of Nidra—rest, noted earlier, thereby marking the end of the biggest festival of this shrine.

The great goddess, the Jaganmata, came to this land in response to an appeal from a devotee in distress.

Hundreds of years ago, in the Krita yuga, there was a brahmin by name of Kardam. This Kardam was a great pundit and was well versed in the Vedas and the Shastras. His wife, Anubhuti, was greatly attached to her husband. She was of a religious bent of mind and the two of them were a very happy couple. Years passed by and Kardam passed away plunging Anubhuti into a sea of grief. She decided to perform the rite of Sati, of sacrificing herself on the pyre of her husband. However, as she was preparing for that customary rite, a heavenly voice told her that although her decision to follow her husband in the other world was highly commendable, the rules of Dharma do not allow those women who were either carrying or who had young children to look after, to perform the rite. Anubhuti had a small son entirely dependent on her and hence she should not immolate herself. Rather reluctantly Anubhuti, who had now realised the responsibility of raising her young one, gave up her determination to perform Sati. She bestowed great attention on the proper training and education of her son, discarding all the pleasures of the world. In due course he became a young man capable of looking after himself. Anubhuti who had already mentally torn herself apart from the material side of this world now decided to cut off the physical connections as well and accepted the fourth or Vanaprasthashram. She became a sanyasini. Leaving her home and taking leave of her young son she went to the mountain Meru. Here she built for herself a small cottage and started practising yoga. Years passed by, she brought under control her body and mind, and was fast approaching her ultimate aim—moksha. But destiny thought otherwise. Her course was not to be quite smooth.

One day while Anubhuti was sitting before her ashram, engrossed in yogic concentration, there arrived one King Kukoor. This Kukoor was a powerful ruler of the danavas

and had encamped near the Meru mountains while on one of his hunting expeditions. In the morning he got on his charger and soon sighted a deer, gave chase and while running after it his eyes fell on the lady. Rather curious to find a lady sitting all alone in the thick of the forests he approached her to enquire. But as he came nearer his intention changed. This Anubhuti was an extremely fair-looking woman and her charms attracted the demon. Kukoor went to her and addressed her. He wanted to to know who she was and what business such a beautiful lady had to isolate hereself from the world? He assured her that whatever be the object of her tapa, it could be realised through a path much easier than the one she was following. She should marry him and that would solve all her problems! But his pleadings fell on deaf ears—the lady had transcended herself above the sensations of the external organs and was trying to concentrate on a yogic samadhi. So she never knew what was happening around her. Her silence provoked the king into shouting at her. The woman showed some faint response to this but increased her concentration and the daitya's efforts were of no avail. His patience was then exhausted and he tried to embrace her and to lift her with the intention of abducting her by force. Now of course her samadhi was disrupted and she came to her senses. She was infuriated and asked the king as to who he was and what he meant by touching her? He repeated his earlier offer and promised to make her his 'patta-rani', the chief queen, in supersession of the thousand and odd he already had! This provoked a tirade of harsh denunciations from the sanyasini. But she understood well that she was precariously near a grave danger. Anubhuti, in this moment of distress, prayed the goddess to come to her rescue. The devi—Tvarita—appeared before her within no time and enquired of the cause of Anubhuti's worry. She told the

devi of the king's evil intentions and requested her to punish the daitya and relieve her of her worries. The devi accepted the task most willingly and immediately called out her force led by the Yoginis, Chamunda, Ganas, Kanka-Bhairav, Kshetrapalas and so on. Kukoor was at first taken aback by the turn of events. He never expected that by touching a helpless woman he would kindle a fire that would ultimately consume him. But now it was there. He had done something the consequences of which he could not escape. Secondly he was not at all averse to fighting and bloodshed. He was a skillful fighter, his army was well-seasoned and was always victorious. He had full confidence in his ability. And as events proved this confidence was not quite ill placed. The devi started the struggle with a shower of arrows on the king. But the King instead of attacking the devi first, turned his attention to her army. Several yoginis and ganas were hurt and laid unconscious on the battle field as a resuit of the handi-work of the king. Then he marched forth to meet the goddess. She sent forth five sharp arrows to greet him. The danava then decided to use his supernatural powers, the maya; and he assumed the form of a horse and started trampling under his hoofs the ganas of the goddess. Then he charged into the army in the form of a he-buffalow, soon changed himself into a lion, then again into a human being. The goddess tolerated this nuisance for some time but when the king hit her with a shakti her patience came to an end. She caught hold of his hair and beheaded him with her sword. Yet another head arose from the body, the devi cut that off again and then ultimately the giant fell dead on the ground. The ganas and pishachchas celebrated the triumph by feasting on the dead army of the king.

Anubhuti was full of gratitude for the devi and started to say it in so many words. But the devi stopped her and

said that it was because of the great punya that the lady had gathered that she had gone there and she was extremely pleased with Anubhuti and would confer whatever boon she might ask for. Anubhuti told the devi that the only boon she would ask for was that she should be able to see and worship the goddess whenever she desired. The devi promised to be in this Loka and selected the Yamunachala —the Yamuna hill of the Sahyadris as the place where she would reside. The devi had another plan before her when she chose this particular spot. She had foreseen the whole life story of Ramachandra and had decided to help him in his worthy task. Yamunachala was on the way from Panchavati to Rameshvar and she knew Rama would come there searching for his wife. Accordingly she was waiting there for the two brothers, encouraged them and advised them to establish and worship Shiva-lings near her abode. These lings are today know as Rameshvar and Lakshmaneshvar. Then she told the pair that they would very soon be confronted by a monkey king and advised them to befriend him to ensure future success. This meeting was held on the Ghat-shila described earlier. Rama praised her, obtained her blessing and proceeded towards Lanka. He was ultimately triumphant in his struggle against Ravana. This story nowhere appears in the Ramayana but occupies a pretty good portion of the *Tulaja-Mahatmya.* It is an explanation of how and why this very spot became the habitat of the devi and is as good as any explanation could be!

Stotras, aratis and prayers of the Bhavani:

1. तुळजापुरा जन हो चला । नमन करा त्वरितेला,
तुकाईला, भवानीला ।।
कुकुरा वधुनि रक्षियलें पै । अनाथ अनुभूतीला ।
शोक हरावा म्हणुनी लंका । दावित रामाला ।
घाट शिळेवरि उभी राहुनी । वर देई भक्ताला ।
स्तवन कराया देत बुद्धि जी । कवि दामाजीला ।।

This poem is composed by one Damaji and invites people to visit the shrine of Bhavani, alias Tvarita alias Tukai. Two incidents from the legendary account are mentioned in this verse, first the slaying of Kukoor to protect Anubhuti and second, the bestowing of the bliss on Shri Rama.

2. देखिली तुळजामाता । निवालो अंतरी सुखें ।
तुटली सर्वाही चिंता । थोर आधार वाटला ।
आघात संकटे वारी । निवारी दुष्ट दुर्जना ।
संकटी भर्वसा मोठा । तत्काळ काम होतसे ।
प्रपंची अमुचे कुली । तुळजा कुलदेवता ।
नेणता ऐकिले होते । जाणता स्मरले मनी ।
श्रेष्ठांची कामना होती । पुर्विली मनकामना ।
नौस जो नौसिला होता । तो त्यापासूनी चुकला ।
तुझिया दर्शना आलों । कृपादृष्टि नवाजिलो ।
तुझा नवाजिला आहे । महंत म्हणती जनी ।

This a composition by Swami Ramadas. He has expressed in the above lines the great satisfaction he received at the darshan of the devi. He mentions that Tulaja was his family deity, eulogises her as the one who always went to the rescue of her devotees when they were in distress and states that he was fortunate to be favoured by a darshan by the goddess.

3. येकची मागणें आता । द्यावे ते मजकारणें ।
तुझा तू वाढवी राजा । सीघ्र आम्हाचि देखता ।
दुष्ट संहारिले मागे । ऐसें उदंड ऐकतो ।
परंतु रोकडें कांहीं । मूळ सामर्थ्य दाखवी ।

The above four lines come from the same pen. Here the Swami is addressing directly the devi and is asking her to raise the young king to greatness. He tells her that her fame had reached him but it pertained to deeds in the past

and he wanted to see some concrete manifestation of the great power she wielded now, before his own eyes.

4. उठी उठी जगज्जननी । अंबे प्रणवरुपिणी ।
अष्टभुजा श्रीमृडानी । तुळजा भवानी जगदंबे ।
करावया चरण क्षालन । केलें वाकोजीने आगमन ।
उभे पुजारी कर जोडून । इच्छिती चरण तीर्थासी ।
मंगलवाद्यें वाजती । भक्त उदयोस्तु गर्जती ।
दाटी जाहली कल्लोळतीर्थी । तपस्वी येती जपासी ।
नैवेद्य भरूनी झडकरी । उपारकर द्वारीं उभा ।
काकड आरती घेउनी करीं । ब्रह्मचारी ओवाळिती ।
हरिद्राकुंकुम सिंचन । रगंमाळ ठसे घालून ।
घ्यावया तुझें दर्शन । नरनारी तिष्ठत ।
ऐसा सोहळा उर्वोवरीं । नसे कलियुगा भीतरीं ।
वदविसी गणेश वैखरी । तू चराचरीं व्यापक ।

This is a prayer sung in the early morning when waking the goddess up. The various rites such as washing the feet, naivedya etc. are said to be ready and awaiting for the devi to get up.

5. सुरवर वरदायीनी । मुरहर सुखसदना ।
परतर परवासिनी । अरिकुल रिपुसदना ।
व्यापक सर्वांघटी । जननी हे मदना ।
करुणसागर रूपे । जागर शशिवदना ।
जय देवी जय देवी जय विश्वभरिते ।
आरती ओवाळूं तुजला गुणसरिते ।
सकळा संजीवनी । मुनिजन मनमोहिनी ।
जन मन विज्जन सज्जन । मज्जन तम शमिनी ।
दासा अभ्यंतरी मानस मृग शयनी
राघव वरदा सुंदरा लाघव मृग नयनी । जय देवी.

This again is an arati sung by Ramadas. Here he addresses her with various adjectives such as, the bene-

factor of the gods, the ocean of mercy, the destroyer of evil etc.

6. दुर्गे दुर्घट भारी तुजविण संसारी
अनाथ नाथे अंबे करुणा विस्तारी
वारी वारी जन्म मरणातें वारी
हारी पडलों आता संकट नीवारी ।
जय देवी जय देवीं महिषासुर मथिनी
सुरवर ईश्वरवरदे तारक संजिवनी ।
त्रिभुवनभुवनी पाहता तुज ऐशी नाही
चारी श्रमले परंतु न बोलवे कांही
साही विवाद करिता पडले प्रवाही
ते तु भक्तालागी पावसि लवलाही ।। १ ।।
प्रसन्नवदने प्रसन्न होशी निजदासा
क्लेशापासुनि सोडवी तोडी भवपाशा
अंबे तुजविण कोण पुरवील आशा
नरहरि तल्लिन झाला पदपंकजलेशा ।
जय देवी जय देवी महिषासुर मथिनी ।। २ ।।

This is the popular arati or prayer of the goddess. Here the devotee prays the devi to rescue him from the cycle of life and death, from the various calamities that befall him in this material world and to give him ultimate salvation.

GANAGAPUR

DATTATREYA

DATTATREYA is considered to be the incarnation of either Vishnu or the all powerful Trinity of Hindu mythology viz. Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. The story of his birth and his life is to be found in various texts. Dattatreya is the son of the sage Atri and his wife Anasuya. The sage practised his penance in a severe manner and his power grew so much that ultimately flames began to emerge from his jatas. Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, greatly pleased at his tapa made their appearance before him and asked him as to what he desired. On his replying that he wanted nothing more than a son of divine powers, having the qualities or 'gunas' of all the three of them, they promised him that in the second part or yuga of the Vaivaswat manvantar, children would be born to him who would be incarnations of themselves. Accordingly, in due course Anasuya gave birth to a number of children, the number being variously stated to be either ten or three. Any way, three of her children were the amshas or parts or part-incarnations of the three gods. The first son, Soma, was an avatar of Brahma, the second Datta that of Vishnu and the third Durvasa that of Shiva. In the best traditions of those days Atri devoted great attention to the education and training of his sons, and soon all the three were proficient in various vidyas, branches of knowledge. Dattatreya, a chip of the old block, undertook a penance equal in severity with that of his father for the attainment of 'true knowledge.' He made the banks of the river Gomati his abode and after hundreds of years of tapa acquired satya-jnyana. He was now ready for the mission of his life. Here it is to be noted that Datta is represented as the amshavatar, a partial incarnation of Vishnu alone and not of all the three gods of the Trinity.

There is another story of how Atri and Anasuya got Datta. Atri was a great tapasvin. The power of his tapa was great and it increased as each day passed, to the great discomfort of the gods. There was the great danger that Atri might dislodge them from their positions if he chose to do so. The tapobala of Anasuya, his wife was equally great. She understood and practised the principles of dharma as few others did. The couple was thus likely to be a formidable rival to the gods and hence Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh got together. If some defect could be found out in the behaviour of the two, or if some situation could be contrived where the couple or either of them would be made to behave in contradiction of dharma, all the great punya accumulated by them would be set at naught. After long deliberation the trio decided upon a stratagem.

One fine morning, while the sage had gone to the river to take his bath and perform the morning rituals, the three diguised themselves as Brahmins and went to Atri's ashram. They announced that they were atithis or guests. Anasuya welcomed them, offered them water (padya) and seat (asana) and worshipped them, showing full respect to these learned brahmins. Then according to the prevalent custom she inquired as to what service she could render them. The atithis were waiting for this very question and pounced upon the opportunity. They told her that they were hungry, had heard that she was capable of giving them 'ichchhabhojan'—any food desired for—and would appreciate a delicious meal. However, they would accept it on one condition. There was a visible pause. The condition was not mentioned immediately. Anasuya implored them not to hesitate and speak out whatever they desired. Well—the food would be accepted only if it was served by Anasuya without having her

clothes on. The lady was greatly startled, and naturally so! What an atrocious demand to make on the host! How could she go before them like that? It was a great dilemma indeed. If she did not bow to their wishes the atithis would be dishonoured—a sin mortifying to one who understands grihastha-dharma. And non-observance of grihastha-dharma meant the destruction of all punya. But Anasuya was equal to the occasion. The three gods had made a sad under-estimate of her prowess. She decided to use her great moral strength to solve the dilemma. She assured the brahmins that their wishes would be fulfilled. She prepared all sorts of rich foods, undressed herself and went out to serve the meals. However, in the meantime the gods had been turned into small babies! They lay there helplessly wailing—Anasuya took pity on them and collected them in her arms. Atri on his return saw them and recognised the real nature of the babes, but took upon himself to raise them. The three later on amalgamated themselves into one, but retained the three heads, and Dattatreya with three heads is there—the incarnation of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh together.

As to the purpose for which Vishnu assumed the Datta incarnation, the *Harivamsha* states that his object was to save the world from the curse of ignorance. People had entirely forgotten the Vedas, they never bothered to perform Vedic rites like sacrifices, nor were they any longer aware of the fourfold division of society. In this darkness Vishnu stepped in.

भूयो भूतात्मनो विष्णोः प्रादुर्भावो महात्मनः ।
दत्तात्रेय इती ख्यातः क्षमया परया युतः ।।
तेन नष्टेसु वेदेषु प्रक्रियासु मखेषु च ।
चातुर्वर्ण्ये तु संकीर्णे धर्मे शिथिलतां गते ।। —हरिवंश (अ ४१).

Kshama or mercy was the chief characteristic or guna of this incarnation—as is only befitting for one who is out

to revive knowledge. Dattatreya revived the study of the Vedas, lifted knowledge from the depths it had reached, re-established Vedic rites and sacrifices and enforced the chaturvarnya system once again. This incarnation was, thus, meant for the specific purpose of the revival of true knowledge—sat-dharma.

This emphasis on the role of Dattatreya as the saviour of truth and knowledge is of cardinal importance in the understanding of the Datta cult. It is this emphasis that is the origin of the custom of referring to Dattatreya as Shri Guru. Once this concept of Datta as 'Guru', the great preacher of dharma, had taken firm root in the religious traditions of the society, a very interesting phenomenon occurred. New sects and philosophical systems that arose later on, especially during the ninth and thirteenth centuries, have attempted to bring in Dattatreya and his great prestige in their fold. The shaktas were probably first to do so, as the *Markandeya Purana*, would show. It depicts Dattatreya engaged freely in the enjoyment of wine and meat and practising the five 'ma'kar rites of the shaktas. He chose according to the *Purana*, Mahur, the famous shakta centre as his abode. Next came the Nath sampradayins who claim Dattatreya as their guru. The Mahanubhavas also lay a similar claim. Amazingly enough, the philosophies of the three sects are by no means similar to each other. They are often contradictory. Nor are they in keeping with the original concept of Dattatreya as found in th *Bhagawat* or the *Mahabharat*. These two works speak of Dattatreya as practising and preaching the sanyas-marga and true knowledge. Most of the conservative thinkers continued to venerate Datta in his original role as Guru. In comparatively recent years it has become a custom in this region to consider the various religious preachers and philosophers or Gurus to be the incarnations of Dattatreya.

Speaking of historical times, the most authoritative exposition of the Datta cult is the '*Gurucharitra*'. According to this work Dattatreya appeared in a number of incarnations, the most important of these historic avatars being that of Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati and his great predecessor Shri Shripad Shrivallabha.

Of these comparatively recent or historical incarnations of Dattatreya, of which *Gurucharitra* speaks, the first is that of Shripad Shrivallabha. The life story of this avatar can be briefly narrated thus. Dattatreya was one morning moving around begging for '*madhukari*'. He went to a house where a shraddh ceremony was in progress. It is a common custom that no food is served to any one on such an occasion before the priests are fed. But the lady of the house gave alms to the atithi, ignoring the custom. Dattatreya was greatly pleased and offered a boon to the lady. She asked that she become the mother of a son as worthy as the god. 'Tathastu' said he. In due course she got a son who was christened 'Shripad'. The life of Shripad who was nothing else than an incarnation of Dattatreya, was full of miracles and worthy deeds. At the time of his vratabandha or thread-ceremony, the child recited all the four Vedas. When the boy attained maturity the parents became keen on marrying him. The young man refused to marry any girl as he was 'already wedded to Yoga'; and asked their permission to proceed for pilgrimages. The old woman pleaded with him in all manner but in vain. Their other children were lame or otherwise disabled and if Shripad deserted them who would look after them in their old age? Shripad merely cast a glance at his brothers and all were rid of their deformities; became strong and healthy. This perhaps released him from the immediate responsibilities of his parents and got their permission to depart on his pilgrimage—although not before he promised them to come and meet them when-

ever they desired to see him. Then ensued a long treck of the various tirths and kshetras of the land. At a place named Kuvarpur he found a lady along with her son, on the point of committing suicide. Shripad dissuaded her from this folly although not before she had extracted two favours from him. The son was a dullard and that was the cause of the lady's extreme action ; now he was turned into a brilliant pundit. Secondly, the woman got a promise that in the next birth she would beget a son of the stature of Shripad Shrivallabha. This incident made Kuvarpur famous as a centre of Datta worship and a number of people were able to get the benefit of the benevolent and kind nature of Shripad. This avatar came to a close on the twelfth day of the second fortnight of Ashvin.

The stage of the next scene is a place named Karanja in Berar. There stayed a man named Madhav in this village. His young wife gave birth to a son who was, as soon became evident, dumb. The parents were naturally greatly distressed to see their very first offspring without speech. The child performed various miracles to reassure them, but not till one day when he turned an iron hammer into a golden one before their very eyes were Madhav and his wife convinced of his supernatural powers. The child then let them know that he would be able to speak only after his maunjibandhan was performed. The only sound that emanated from his mouth till then was 'Om'. He was named Narahari. At the time of his thread ceremony the boy recited all the four Vedas and the six Shastras. This was not an ordinary feat and the people knew that here was a child of divine powers. As in his previous birth, Dattatreya sought the permission of his parents to proceed for pilgrimage. There was a similar plea from his mother. The boy tried to comfort her by tendering advice as to the impermanent nature of the material world. But the woman, worldly as

she was, still insisted on Narahari not leaving them. Ultimately he told her that they would get more sons and daughters to look after them and promised to stay with them till they got another son. Accordingly he continued to be with his parents for another year and then left in search for knowledge. He proceeded to Kashi, where his determination and grasp impressed the learned pundits so much that one of them, Shri Krishna Sarasvati requested him to accept and preach the Sanyas marga. This the young man readily accepted and was rechristened Nrisimha Sarasvati. On his attainment of true knowledge he undertook a pilgrimage of all the places of religious significance. His itinerary included Gaya, Prayaga, Badrikedar and so on. After nearly twenty-four years he returned to Karanja to meet his aged parents. They were overjoyed to see this illustrious son. The villagers vied with each other to honour him and the great Swamin assumed as many forms as the number of villagers desirous of worshipping him. The Swamin blessed his parents with ultimate bliss or moksha, and after a few days' halt at Karanja proceeded southwards. Henceforth till the close of this avatar, the time of Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati was spent in helping needy people and preaching the doctrines of dharma, Various miraculous deeds have been recorded. There lived at Wadi (Narasoba wadi in the Kolhapur district) a poor brahmin. He had a small house and in its front a bean vine had grown. The brahmin made a living by officiating as a priest and also begged for madhukari. When he could not get any alms he would go pluck the beans and prepare a meal out of them. Thus the small vine was quite an important support for himself and his family. Nrisimha Sarasvati once went to beg for madhukari and the brahmin having nothing with him cooked the beans and served them to the atithi. The atithi was outworldly pleased but while departing cut off the trunk of

the vine. The wife of the brahmin and his sons were shocked at this behaviour of his but the brahmin consoled them as best as he could. Later on he decided to dig out whatever remained of the plant and found a jar full of gold coins beneath it. He realised the meaning of the sanyasin's action and became a great devotee of his. Similar incidents happened at various places. A barren buffalow started giving milk, a member of the Maha community could recite the Vedas, and a devotee could feed nearly three thousand people from a pot that could not hold more than two and a half seers of grain. Other deeds include the bringing to life a person to whose widowed wife he had inadvertantly given the customary blessing अष्टपुत्रा सौभाग्यवती भव etc; being simultaneously present at eight different spots and so on. His fame spread far and wide. In Saka 1380, i.e. 1458 A. D. Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati accepted samadhi. But the Guru had blessed, as stated earlier, Ganagapur, Audumbar and Narsoba Wadi with his eternal presence. This is felt by some devotees in various ways.

Mahur in central India is a very well known centre of this cult, but on this side of the Godavari it is Ganagapur that enjoys pre-eminence, Audumbar and Narasoba Wedi are the secondary sthans. Here pilgrims and those who seek particular favours from the deity flock by their hundreds. It is commonly believed that Dattatreya in his incarnation as Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati has endowed all the three places with his eternal presence. Out of these places Ganagapur variously referred to as Gandharvapur, Ganagabhavan etc. being the favourite one of the Guru is dealt with in detail below.

Ganagapur lies outside the political boundaries of the present state of Maharashtra, but in the cultural traditions, especially in relation to the Datta sampradaya, of this land, that place plays an important role. Fifty miles to

the south east of Sholapur on the main line of the Bombay-Madras route of the Central Railways is the station Ganagapur. The Ganagapur kshetra is some fourteen miles to the south of this station. Regular buses run to the kshetra and back. The state buses are so timed as to suit passengers arriving and going back by the important trains on the route. Some important places like Gulburga are directly linked with Ganagapur by bus service. When the bus service was not available, the distance between the station and the town had to be travelled either on foot or by bullock carts. Some pious devotees of Dattatreya had maintained in those days rest-houses and annachhatras at intervals along the road. Now they are no longer necessary and seem to have fallen in disuse.

Ganagapur has professional hosts known as upadhyayas and they usually look after a new-comer quite well. In fact, till recently that was the only arrangement for lodging and boarding available at the place. Like many other kshetras throughout India, these upadhyayas have with them old records of visitors. If by any chance the name of one's ancestor, who might have happened to visit the kshetra is found in the records of an upadhyaya the person is expected to go to that very upadhyaya as his guest. If not, he is claimed as a guest by the upadhyaya whose turn of playing host would be in force that day. Recently a number of dharmashalas have been built. The most modern is one known as the Chidanand dharmashala. Rooms and even some utensils are rented in this dharmashala and except during yatras there is no limit on the number of days for which a person might stay at the place. This resthouse was erected in memory of one Chidanand Swami, a great Yogin who had stayed at Ganagapur and later on took samadhi in the Bhima. The story goes that the body of this yogin was recovered near a village named Itagi and a samadhi erected over it.

Bhakts donated large sums amounting to more than a hundred thousand rupees. This money was utilised for the construction of this dharmashala. The building is quite modern and airy and affords excellent view of the river-side. In addition to the upadhyayas there are the Joshis and the Salakaris. Both have specific temple services. The services of the Joshi would be required by the pilgrim practically immediately on arrival at Ganagapur. The kshetra compasses an area of nearly four square miles and several temples and sacred spots are scattered over this area. It is the profession of the Joshis to take the pilgrim around the kshetra and to explain the significance of the various spots to him. The services of these guides are, therefore, needless to say, quite valuable to a visitor. The Joshis would also guide the pilgrim about the various rites to be performed at particular spots.

The shrine at Ganagapur has not yet assumed the form of a temple, though it is on its way to do so. Originally it was a math or ashram of Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati. It is an old block of buildings. The main gate faces towards the west. This gate is surmounted by a nagarkhana of the Maratha model. On getting entrance one comes into a spacious mandap. This must have been once an open court-yard after the fashion of medieval mansions, but is now completely roofed over. Around this courtyard are pillared aisles now turned into rooms by putting up wall curtains. On a raised platform on the southern side of the mandap is the holy of holies, It is a very small room divided into two by a wall. The outer part has two doors and the visitor is admitted there. In the inner portion are the image of Dattatreya and the 'nirguna padukas'—a pair of sandals. A very small opening in the wall gives the pilgrim a glimpse of the image. This opening is framed in a silver-plate framework. Some feet away is a door in the dividing curtain. The door has also a plated frame donated by a

devotee. In front of this, inside the sanctuary are the padukas. It is these padukas that are the object of worship at this place. It is a symbol of the constant and eternal presence of Dattatreya in his form as Nrisimha Sarasvati at this kshetra. Facing the padukas in a small niche in the western wall is a small Ganesh image known as Shri Vighnahar Chintamani. This image is said to have been estabished by the Guru when he came to stay in this math. Nobody is allowed to enter the garbhagriha that contains the padukas and the image.

The management committee has during recent years undertaken the work of the construction of a new temple that would encase the older room. The walls of the new temple have come up to the height of some ten feet. It is being built after the best Chalukyan models and there is little doubt that although small in size, it would be a very pretty structure when completed. However, it is rather small in size, probably the availability of funds being a limitation. Any way, within the next ten or twelve years an altogether different and more pleasant external appearance would meet the eyes of the pilgrim. And as this newer structure encloses within itself the older math, the sanctity attached to it is not reduced in any manner whatever.

Around this shrine are objects connected with the life of Shri Guru, and some images. The chief object of interest is the 'ashvathha' tree that stood outside the math. According to legend, a brahmarakshasa had made his abode on his tree. People were afraid of going anywhere near it. But Shri Guru took pity on him and gave him permanent release—moksha. On the platform surrounding the tree are the images of Naganath and Hanuman. This old tree dried out some years ago and a new one is planted in its place. On the northern side there are the images of Hanuman and Ganesh. This is the chief shrine and its

surroundings. The images around the math have no cult significance but are there either by accident or through traditional association with the life of Shri Guru.

The water of the rivers Bhima and Amaraja, especially at the spot of their confluence, are considered extremely holy. In an area of about three miles there are eight 'tirths' in the course of the Bhima. These tirths are equal in importance to those at Kashi, Gaya and Prayaga and this was one of the reasons why Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati selected Gandharvapur for his ultimate residence. He had visited probably every sacred spot in the course of his sojourns, but preferred this kshetra to all others. The river Amaraja is the remnant of ambrosia. Once the gods were engaged in a fierce struggle against a demon named Jalandhara. So many of them died that it became necessary to carry ambrosia to the spot to revive them. Some of it spilled in transport at the spot where the Amaraja rises. From then onwards started the eternal course of this small river. On the confluence of the Bhima and the Amaraja is the Shat-kula tirth. A bath in this tirth is equivalent to bathing at Prayaga. The Nrisimha tirth lies opposite the Shiva temple on the confluence. If this Shiva is worshipped after a dip in the Nrisimha tirth, it bestows on the pilgrim the same punya as that of having worshipped Shri Shaila Mallikarjuna. The Bhagirathi tirth is equivalent to the Manikarnika tirth. There is the Papavinashi tirth, which, as the name suggests washes away all sin. Then there is the Koti tirth. The Rudra tirth equates with Gaya and the Chakratirth with Dwaravati. The Manmath tirth which is opposite the Kalleshvar Mahadev is as good as Gokarna tirth. The snana in the sangam or confluence is obviously the most important rite for the pilgrim. In addition to bathing, other rites like shradhha and kshaur are also performed at various tirths. The

joshis, as stated earlier are the best guides for a pilgrim in this matter.

The daily worship and other rituals are quite elaborate, but do not differ much from those seen at other centres like Kolhapur. Early morning at three o'clock is the Kakad-arati. After this, the puja of the previous day is removed and the mahapuja begins. The other rituals, the sixteen upacharas are offered without touching the padukas. Vighnahar Chintamani is then worshipped, the puja of the other deities in the vicinity of the math is then performed. On this being completed, the prath or morning arati is sung, bringing to an end the puja. The whole ceremony takes around three hours, beginning at three and ending by six in the morning. The padukas are placed during the course of this puja in front of the door of the innermost chamber of the garbhagriha. From this time onwards up to the presentation of the mahanaivedya, that is, approximately till one o'clock, the padukas are open to view—darshan for any one. Similarly, all offerings including various types of pujas are to be done during this period. After the mahanaivedya is presented the padukas are removed from the door and placed in front of the image so that they can be viewed only through the small window in the wall. In the evening, by eight o'clock the third session of worship is held. This consists of mainly the singing of aratis and prayers. A small procession led by the bhaldars—mace bearers—and consisting of the pujaris and salkaris, and other devotees circumambulates the shrine three times. All along the way the *Indukoti-stotra* is recited. Now this procession stops on its way to sing aratis to the other subsidiary deities like Hanuman and Nrisimha that are around the shrine. Next, aratis are sung before Vighnahar Chintamani and then Karpur-arati of the padukas. Tirth and angara are distributed to all present. Mantrapushpa follows this, the last but one rite

being the singing of the Shejarati. At ten o'clock the pancha-padi (five versed) bhajan is recited and the day comes to and end. This routine is slightly altered on every Thursday. The evening programme on that day includes the palkhi or palanquin procession. The utsavamurti of the Guru is seated in the palanquin decked out in excellent garments and ornaments. The procession goes round the shrine thrice, special songs written for the occasion being recited along the way. The palkhi is then brought to a halt, arati is sung and the programme from Karpurarati onwards follows as usual.

Apart from this daily worship there are a number of festival occasions—utsavas. These are more than fifteen in number. Out of these the one that takes place during the first four days of the first fortnight of the month of Magha is the most popular, the purpose of the utsava being the 'punya-smarana' of the Guru, Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati. It was on the first day of the month that Shai Guru brought to an end his existence in this world, and it is his death anniversary that is celebrated during the four days. The other important festivals are the birth-days of Nrisimha Sarasvati, of Shripad Shri-vallabha, Datta-jayanti aad Nrisimha-jayanti.

The first day of the new year, Chaitra pratipada is celebrated with great enthusiasm and pomp. In addition to ashtagandh, gandh prepared from Kasturi (musk) and keshar (saffron) is applied to the padukas. In the evening the jyotishi tells the forecast for the year. The palanquin procession is taken out on this day. The fourteenth day of the first half of Vaishakh is the birth anniversary of Nrisimha and the main feature of the celebration is a feast held on the full-moon day. The first ten days of the next month, Jyeshtha, are devoted to the worship of the River Bhima. On the fullmoon day of Ashadh the Vyaspuja is performed. During the entire month of Shravan, abhisheka

is performed on the deity daily, the end or the samapti being celebrated with distribution of food.

Bhadrapad chaturthi, the fourth day of that month, when Ganesh janma is observed everywhere, is also the birth anniversary of Shri Shripad Shrivallabha. Ceremonial worship of the padukas and of Vighnahar Chintamani takes place. The latter is draped in new constumes and ornaments, prasad is distributed to all those present. Vijayadashmi, the tenth day of the month of Ashvin is marked by worship of the Shami tree and a palanquin procession in the evening. The twelfth day of the second half of the same month, i.e. Ashvin is the death-anniversary of Shripad Shrivallabha, when in addition to routine worships and rituals a feast is given to the devotees. Two days later, i.e. on the day of Narakachaturdashi, the priests and pilgrims go out in procession, singing bhajans, to take a dip in all the eight tirths of the Bhima. The tirths are described above. The fifteenth and sixteenth day of Kartika are marked by a procession of the palkhi to the Bhima Amaraja confluence. Around ten o'clock in the morning of the full-moon day the utsavamurti is dressed in rich silken costumes, all sorts of ornaments are put upon the image and the palkhi proceeds towards the city gates to the accompaniment of a band of musicians. From the city-gates the party starts at a very quick pace. The first halt is on the Vishranti katta or resting platform. This spot has been sanctified by the practice of Shri Guru of resting himself here when going to and coming back from the confluence. Here some edibles are distributed. The destination is the next stop, the Sangameshvar temple opposite the confluence. Married women wash the feet of those who bear the palanquin, arati is sung and the image placed in the Sangameshvar temple. Here abhisheka and mahanaivedya take place and then a great feast follows. By this time the hands of the clock show nine in the

evening. For an hour after this arati is sung. After the distribution of prasad the return journey of the palkhi starts. This indeed is a very remarkable sight. Scores of torches are set alight and the palakhi starts its return march at a good pace, the bearers and the accompanying procession running to the tune of several bhajans. Off and on the cheers of 'Anantakoti Brahmandanayak' enliven the atmosphere. There is a halt at the vishranti katta. The palakhi comes back to the math by around three or four in the morning.

Datta jayanti falls on the fourteenth day of the month of Margashirsha. A fairly large fair is held on this occasion. A sizeable crowd gathers together. The celebrations are most elaborate. A temporary shrine is erected in the outer mandap, an image of Shri Vishnu, consisting only of a mask—mukhavata—is placed in it. Ceremonial worship is performed. At twelve in the afternoon the image is placed in a cradle and songs recited to the 'child'. *Suntha* and *gul* are distributed as prasad. Palakhi is taken out in the evening and then the utsava-murti is again placed in the mandap. Throughout the night programmes like kirtans, bhajans and singing take place. In the morning, the lalit, a kind of dramatic performance based on the dashavataras is exhibited. Again Some sweets are distributed and the celebrations come to an end.

The first four days of the second half of the month of Magha are celebrated as the death anniversary of Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati. Ceremonial worship, palanquin processions and kirtans etc. constitute the main items. The most important aspect is the worship of the sanyasins and a bath in the holy waters of the Bhima. This occasion attracts the largest number of pilgrims to the spot.

The devotee can offer his services or seva to the Guru in several ways. The most common and popular way,

followed especially by those affected by some affliction is to stay at Ganagapur, attend all sessions of worships and aratis and beg in the name of the god—madhukari. For the convenience of others who cannot for any reason stay there, the management has fixed certain types of worships and offerings that could be presented to the god. On payment of the necessary rates they are performed by the pujaris on behalf of the donor. Ordinary worship costs Rs. 2.25, abhisheka Rs. 7.25, naivedya ten rupees, while the palanquin can be taken out for eighteen rupees. Laghurudra costs fiftyone rupees. A very popular mode is the payment of some money to the pujaris from which alms—madhukari is distributed to those who stay there for seva. The minimum on this count should not be less than fifteen rupees. Donations of other sorts are always welcome and presently at least, contributions towards the renovation project are more so.

Something might be profitably said about the other two Dattatreya sthans as well. Audumbar is a very small village populated rather recently, near the railway station Bhilavadi on the Southern railway's Poona-Bangalore track. A visitor has to cross the river Krishna by ferry and it is advisable to avoid the rainy season when the river is in spate. The kshetra itself is on the Krishna river. There are some good dharmashalas at this place; the pujaris also receive and accommodate visitors. The chief centre of attraction is, as at Ganagapur, a set of two foot-prints or padukas. During the last century the princes of the Sangli state and a number of other devotees have caused to be built a temple over the padukas and ghats on the river. The routine of worship of the padukas is not much different from that at Ganagapur. On each Saturday and full-moon day, except during the four months of Ashadha, Shravan, Bhadrapad and Ashvin, the palkhi is taken out. The birth anniversaries

of Shri Dattatreya, Shri Shripad Shrivallabha and Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati. the Guru-pratipada, are some of the festivals celebrated here. The expenses of the routine and ceremonial rites are defrayed mainly through popular contributions although there are certain annual grants made for some specific purposes such as the palakhi procession and the chaughada. At Audumbar also a large number of Sevakaris come and stay to obtain relief from some malady or other, some divine curse or supernatural evil. After a stay of nearly four months at this place during which time he blessed the sixty four yogins, Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati departed for another village on the Krishna. This was Narasoba wadi. Formerly it was a wadi or offshoot of the village Amrapur by which name it is mentioned in the *Gurucharitra*. Narasoba wadi is approached from the Jayasingpur station on the Miraj-Kolhapur railway. This is a kshetra which enjoys a popularity amongst the Datta sampradayins that is next to only Ganagapur. The object of worship is of course the padukas and the ritual routine is quite similar to the other two centres. The importance of this kshetra increased multifold because of the residence here of such eminent spiritual leaders as Shri Vasudevanand Sarasvati, who is regarded as an avatar of Dattatreya. Practices regarding the seva or service of the deity are the same as at the other two centres.

The description of these sthanas cannot be brought to a close without reference to a peculiar circumstance regarding all the three places. All are famous as spots where redemption from the troubles of evil spirits like ghosts, witches and other varieties like brahmarakshasas is obtained. The victim is to be taken to the shrine and made to attend the worships and more especially the prayer or aratis. Due to the influence of the god, the spirits gradually become uneasy and ultimately leave their captive alone. At

the time of the prayers one often sees in the shrine victims dancing, constantly bending backwards and forwards, and the entire atmosphere is filled with their wailings and shrieks. Although most of the deities are objects of Sakama bhakti none except Dattatreya is as prominent in the field of evil spirits and black magic. There is no kind of logical or historical explanation of how the Dattatreya cult came to be associated with this business. In the legends and myths concerning Dattatreya there is nothing to connect him so closely with the so called power over the evil spirits. The only significant factors are some two or three incidents in the lives of Shripad Shrivallabha and Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati, when they redeemed bedevilled persons from the grasps of brahmarakshasas and pishachas. Whatever it might be, the fact remains that all these centres of the Datta cult today are more well-known for their miraculous supernatural powers rather than as centres of philosophical learnings or yoga. There is little doubt the latter would have been more befitting Shri Dattatreya's role as Guru—the preacher of dharma.

1. This stotra is recited at the time of the Palanquin processions and aratis; and contains the most commonplace adjectives that could be applied to any divine being, such as, 'the giver of health and wealth', 'the benefactor of the devotees' etc. In addition, certain adjectives special to the deity to be prayed, as 'the one who stays on the banks of Krishna and Venna' etc. are mentioned. After every four lines the burden 'I bow before you time and again' is repeated.

इंदु कोटि तेज किरण सिंधु भक्तवत्सलम् ।
नंदनात्रिमुनुदत्तमिदिराक्ष श्रीगुरुम् ।
गंधमाल्यअक्षतादि वृंददेव वंदितम् ।
वंदयामि नारसिंह सरस्वतीश पाहि माम् ।।
मायापाशअंधकार जातदूर भास्करम् ।

आयताश्व पाहि श्रीय वल्लभेशनायकम् ।
सेव्य भक्त वृंदवरद भूयो भूयो नमाम्यहम् ।। १ ।।
चित्तजादिवर्ग षटक्मत्तणां कुशम् ।
तत्त्वसारशोभितात्म दत्तश्रीयवल्लभम् ।
उत्तमावतारभूत कर्तृ भक्तवत्सलम् ।। २ ।।
व्योमआपतेजवायुभूमि कर्तु ' मिश्वरम् ।
कामक्रोधमोहरहित सोमसूर्यलोचनम् ।
कामितार्थदातृभक्तकामधेनु श्रीगुरुम् ।। ३ ।।
पुंडरीकआयताक्षकुंडलेंदुतेजसम् ।
चंडदुरित खंडनार्थ दंडधारि श्रीगुरुम् ।
मंडलीकमौलिमार्तंडभासिताननम् ।। ४ ।।
वेदशास्त्र स्तुत्यपादआदिमूर्ति श्रीगुरुम् ।
नादबिंदु कलातीत कल्पपादसेव्ययम् ।
सेव्य भक्तवृंदवरद भूयो भूयो नमाम्यहम् ।। ५ ।।
अष्टयोगतत्त्वनिष्ठ तुष्ट ज्ञानवारिधि ।
कृष्णावेणीतीरवास पंचनदी संगमम् ।
कष्टदैन्यदूर भक्ततुष्टकाम्य दायकम् ।। ६ ।।
नारसिंहसरस्वतीशनाम अष्टमौक्तिकम् ।
हारकृत्य शारदेन गंगाधाराख्यस्वात्मजम् ।
धारुणीक देवदीक्ष गुरुमूर्तितोषितम् ।
परमात्मानंद श्रीयपुत्रपौत्रदायकम् ।। ७ ।।
नारसिंह सरस्वतीश अष्टकं च यः पठेत् ।
घोरसिंधुसंसार तारणाख्य मोक्षसाधनम् ।
सारज्ञान दीर्घ आयुरारोग्यादिसंपदम् ।
चारुवर्ग काम्यलाभ वारंवारं यः पठेत् ।। ८ ।।

2. कृष्णापंचगंगा संगम निजस्थान ।
चरित्र दावुनि केलें गाणगापुरी गमन ।
तेथे भक्तश्रेष्ठ त्रिविक्रम यति जाण ।
विश्वरूपे तया दिधले दर्शन ।
जय देव जय देव जय सद्गुरुदत्ता

नरसिंह सरस्वति नामें जय विश्वंभरिता ।
वंध्या साठी वर्षे पुत्र निधान ।
मृत ब्राह्मण उठवी तीर्थ शिंपुन ।
वांझ महिषी काढवी दुग्ध दोहून ।
अंतज्याचे मुखीं निगम संपूण ।। जय देव०
शुष्ककाष्ठीं पल्लव दावुनी लवलाही ।
कुष्टी ब्राह्मण केला साधू निजदेही ।
अभिनव लीला त्याची मी वर्णू कांही ।
म्लेंच्छ राजा येउनी वंदी तव पायी ।। जय देव०
दिपवाळीचे दिवशीं भक्त येवोनी ।
आठहिजण मस्तक ठेवीती चरणी ।
आठहि ग्रामीं भिक्षा केली ते दिनी ।
निमिषमात्रे तंतुक नेला शिवस्थानी ।। जय देव०
ऐसे चरित्र दाऊनी जड उद्धरीले ।
भक्त वत्सल ऐसे ब्रीद मिरवीलें ।
अगाध महिमा म्हणूनी वेदश्रुति बोले ।
गंगाधरतनय वंदी पाऊलें ।। जय देव०

The composer is the son of Gangadhar. Apart from the usual burden of 'I bow before you', each line of the verse mentions some incident from the life of Narsimha Sarasvati. He stayed near the confluence of Panchaganga and Krishna and from there went to Ganagapur where he blessed Trivikrama Yati. Here he was responsible for bringing about many miraculous things. A woman of sixty procured a child through his blessings, a member of a lowly caste could recite the Vedas, a tree bloomed forth from a stick and so on.

3. तीन शिरे सहा हात । तया माझा दंडवत ।
काखे झोळी पुढे श्वान । नित्य जान्हवीचें स्नान ।
दंड कमंडलु हाती । पायी खडावा गर्जती ।
माथा शोभे जटाभार । अंगी विभूति सुन्दर ।
तुका म्हणे दिगंबर । तया माझा नमस्कार ।

The verse is by the famous saint Tukaram. It is chiefly of the nature of an iconographical description. He has first described the deity with all his lakshanas and then offered him his respects. The god has three heads and six arms, from the shoulders is hanging a 'zoli', a cotton bag in which to collect alms, in his front are some dogs, he holds the danda and kamandalu and on his head are the jatamukutas.

4. नमन माझे गुरुराया । महाराजा दत्तात्रेया ।
तुझी अवधूत मूर्ति । माझ्या जीवाची विश्रांती ।
जीवीचे साकडे । कोण उगविल कोडे ।
अनसूयासुता । तुका म्हणे पाव आता ।

A poem from the same pen which exhorts the god to lead the author to true knowledge and moksha.

5. The following is an arati of Dattatreya sung by Ramadas. In the first stanza is described the birth of Dattatreya, how the three gods, Brahma Vishnu and Mahesh tried to wreck the tapa of Anasuya and Atri and how they were converted into small babes by the former. In the second the idea is developed further. The wives of the three gods went and begged Anasuya to return to them their husbands, she asked them to find out who was who. They failed to do it and were then given to understand the logic of the various Incarnations and then they went home satisfied. In the third stanza the commonly held belief that Dattatreya is still alive and moves to three different places during a single day is mentioned. According to this belief he is at Kashi in the morning, takes his bath etc. there, then goes to Karvir to take his food and from there goes to Mahur for his night's rest. The author offers his respects to the deity whose life and deeds are so wonderful.

विधी हरिहर सुन्दर दिगंबर झाले
अनसूयेचें सत्व पाहवया आले
तेथें तीन्ही बालक करूनी ठेविले
दत्त दत्त ऐसे नाम पाविले ।
जय देव जय देव जय दत्तात्रेया ।
आरती ओवाळूं तुम्हा देवत्रया ।।
तिन्ही देवांच्या वधू पति पागों आल्या
त्यांना म्हणे ओळखूनि ध्या मतिला आपुल्या
कोमल शब्दें करुणा भाकूं लागल्या
त्याहि समजाविल्या स्वस्थाना गेल्या ।
जय देव जय देव जय दत्तात्रेया ।
काशीक्षेत्रीं स्नान करविरि भोजन
माहूरी शायन होय प्रतिदिन
ऐसे अघटित सिद्ध आहे महिमान
दास म्हणे तो हे नोहे सामान्य
जय देव जय देव जय दत्तात्रेया ।

PEDHE

PARASHURAMA

THE marriage ceremonies were over. The great assemblage of emperors and kings, sages and rishis was fast breaking up. King Dasharath had taken his leave of Janaka and the huge marriage party had started on its homeward journey. A large contingent of Ayodhya troops formed the advance guard of the party, numerous citizens and sages accompanied the royal family. For a while everything went fine. Then all of a sudden the King witnessed some evil omens. All around all kinds of birds started bellowing out strange sounds; and a number of animals were seen passing by his right. He immediately summoned Vasishtha to his presence and expressed his anxiety about what he had noticed. The great sage thought about it for a moment and then told his King that those two signs together suggest that a great danger was imminent but that it would pass off without any harm to anybody. At this juncture a violent gale burst out. Winds swept everything before them, clouds of dust covered everything, the sun was no longer visible. From this holocaust emerged a giant form. The man had a face brilliant as sunshine, his hair was tied in a knot over his head, in his right hand he wielded an outsize bow. The other hand held the famous battle-axe, parashu. The elders immediately recognised him as Parashurama, the son of Jamadagni. Everybody wondered whether the old warrior had appeared to take up the old cudgels against the kshatriyas or whether he had any grievance against Dasharath or any of his sons. But nobody wasted time in fruitless speculation. Vasishtha and the other priests and sages hurried to welcome

Parashurama and offered him the traditional puja. He accepted the welcome but setting aside Dasharath, addressed himself to Ramachandra. Since the latter had performed a deed impossible for any ordinary soul, had made ready and broken the bow that was with King Janaka, Parashurama had brought another bow, which he should now try to use. If he was successful in doing so, he was to face a duel with Parashurama and he could assure Rama that the duel would be worthy of Rama's prowess! The old King, Dasharath, was naturally disturbed at this offer and tried to talk Parashurama out of his plan. But no, Rama had to put the string on the bow, which was prepared for and used by Vishnu himself. The young prince was equal to the occasion; he took the bow and the arrows from the ancient warrior, put on the string and placed the arrow in position. Now he was speaking from a position of strength and told Parashurama that the Vaishnava arrow would not be wasted and would destroy either his 'gati'—power of moving wherever he wanted, or the Lokas he had achieved through his great tapa. Parashurama expressed great satisfaction at this assertion of his strength by the young Raghava and offered to loose the Lokas. The arrow accordingly destroyed them. Parashurama was then worshipped and honoured by Rama and the former took his leave. The object of his visit to Ramachandra was to give him the great bow. And although he knew that Rama was indeed an incarnation of Vishnu, he had to make sure that it went to the proper hands. Having made his contribution to the ultimate victory of the divine cause, Parashurama returned to his abode on the Mahendra mountains.

Parashurama is one of the chir-jivins, one of the seven immortal souls known to Hindu mythology. The *Harivamsha* mentions Parashurama as the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. The family in which he was born was famous-

The kula of the Bhrugus was well known for its learning and integrity. The grandfather of Parashurama, who was also known as Bhargavrama, was Richika, who was the brother-in-law to the great kshatriya sage Vishvamitra. His father, Jamadagni was also married to a kshatriya princess, Renuka, the daughter of King Prasenajit or Renu of the Ikshvaku clan. However, as society was patriarchal, Parashurama was a brahmin. He had four brothers, Rumanvat, Sushena, Vasu and Vishvavasu. Bhargavrama was the youngest of the lot.

When he came of age, he devoted great attention to learning. Though he was equally proficient in all the branches of knowledge, his special favourite was dhanur-vidya. When his preliminary education was over, he went to the Gandhamadan mountains and there undertook penance to please Shiva. From the Lord of the Kailasa, he received several astras and also the great battle-axe. This parashu always gleamed like sunshine and its edge was never dulled. Shiva wos not satisfied merely by the gift of the astras, but decided to test Bhargavrama's strength and skill and actually engaged in a duel with him. The disciple proved his merit and in the process left the mark of his Parashu on the forehead of his benefactor, who was on that count called 'khandaparashu' thereafter. Greatly satisfied with his own achievements, the young man returned to the ashram of his father.

Here a strange thing happened. One day his mother. Renuka, had gone to the river as usual for her daily morning chores. It so happened that King Chitrarath of vartikavat had gone to the same river for jala-krida (water-sport). This prince was an extremely handsome man and Renuka could not help looking at him more often than she should have. The pang of passion that had arisen in her heart was brief and momentary, but the sense of guil would not leave her. As she returned to her ashram,

Jamadagni knew through his tapobala what had happened and decided to destroy the sinful soul. His sons had gone away for collecting food and fire-wood. As they came back he ordered each of them to kill Renuka. First came Rumanvat, then Sushena, then Vasu and then Vishvavasu, but all four flatly refused to obey their father's crazy order. Soon the youngest one returned. He was of as ferocious a temperament as his father and no sooner had Jamadagni uttered his command than Bhargavrama beheaded the unfortunate lady. The father was greatly pleased with the obedient nature of his son and offered whatever boon Parashurama wanted. He promptly asked for rejuvenation of his dear mother. Renuka was brought back to life.

Meanwhile, another formidable personage was shaping up in the Narmada valley who was destined to clash with Bhargavrama. His name was Kartavirya and he belonged to the Haihaya dynasty. He was also famous as Sahasrarjuna. As the story goes, just as Shiva had favoured Bhargavrama with his blessings, Vishnu in his avatara of Dattatreya had given his blessings to Kartavirya. It was due to the boon conferred on him by Dattatreya that Kartavirya got a thousand arms in place of his original two. With this superhuman power, the Haihaya prince launched in real earnest his campaign for the conquest of the world. Kartavirya decided to perform digvijaya, the symbolic conquest of all the quarters, so as to prove his supremacy over all the kshatriyas and rulers. There was nothing wrong with this. But the prince went much further than that. He went about challenging anybody that he came across and destroying anything that was sacred. He demolished the ashram of Vasishtha and in return got a curse that Parashurama would cut off his thousand arms before long. Having no kshatriya enemies worth his while on the earth Kartavirya

once turned upon the sea. The latter most humbly told him that he himself was powerless before a warrior as powerful as Kartavirya, but that he would soon find his equal in the youngest son of Jamadagni.

The sons of the Haihaya monarch were equally brave and equally reckless. While on one of their maraudering missions they fell on the ashram of Jamadagni and stole his 'Kamadhenu' from him. Parashurama learnt of the atrocity and forthwith marched to punish Kartavirya. The latter was defeated and had to restore the cow to Parashurama. But the incident instead of closing the quarrel marked the beginning of a blood-feud that was smouldering throughout the length and breadth of the land for hundreds of years. To revenge the discomfiture of their father, Kartavirya's sons again attacked Jamadagni's ashram and slew the helpless old man. On his return to the ashram Parashurama learnt of what had happened and went so mad with rage that he vowed to wipe out from the face of the earth the perpetrators of this ghastly crime—the kshatriyas. The body of Jamadagni bore the marks of twenty-one wounds and Parashurama declared that he would slay the kshatriyas so many times. His rage and grief increased as his mother Renuka passed away of the shock. Now he had no attachments to this material world and he stepped out of the ashram with the grim determination to put into execution his avowed aim.

Brandishing his axe Parashurama entered the territories of the Haihaya king thus setting aflame another furious contest. The troops sent against him were destroyed by the young man single-handed. This brought the King himself on the field. A fierce duel ensued, that lasted for a very long time. Kartavirya was a man of no mean courage and skill and it was with great effort that Bhargavrama could overcome him. All the thousand

arms were cut off with his axe by Parashurama and the great Haihaya lost his life in the battle. His sons immediately went into the assault. It was no longer a contest between two individuals. The Jamadagnya mounted his chariot and wielding his bow and arrows annihilated all of them. Of the huge army mustered by the Haihayas a few souls escaped the grim fate of their leaders.

Although he had not annihilated all the kshatriyas on the earth he had punished the guilty parties and some of the elders were able to persuade him not to pursue his vow to its terrible logical end. He was also in a mellower mood and decided to take to the jungle and spend his remaining years in penance and to devote his energies to vidyadana, teaching, like a true brahmin. Years passed by, centuries elapsed, and then something happened that erupted the volcano again. Some descendant of Vishvamitra proved to be so indiscreet as to publicly mention that Parashurama was a hollow boaster; he never had fulfilled his vow of annihilating the kshatriyas. He was foolish enough to treat Parashurama's temperance as cowardice. He pointed to a large gathering of kshatriya princes that had come together to celebrate a sacrifice in Yayatinagar and wanted to know whether it was not proof enough of Parashurama's powerlessness that so many of the kshatriyas were moving about openly and honourably! The tapa was a convenient guise behind which was hidden the fear of his old enemies. This public ridicule was too much for Bhargavrama to bear. He was by nature warlike and this provocation was more than what was needed. He took up the challenge, dusted the parashu and bow and went after the culprits.

He undertook a regular tour of the land in search of kshatriyas and challenged them to a battle whenever and wherever he met one. The kshatriyas were professional fighters and all were by no means easy preys to the

infuriated Rama's axe. Many offered a tough resistance. The courage and skill of Bhargavrama was extended to the fullest. Scores of kshatriyas were killed. Numerous others absconded and went into hiding. Parashurama lay low for a time and then again went after his foes. This game of hide and seek took place several times, until the lands of Anga, Kalinga, Malawa, Videha, Kashmir, Kunti, Shibi, that were formerly the strongholds of the kshatriyas were entirely rid of the warrior race. Some great battles were fought, one of them on the famous field of Kurukshetra and legendary accounts state that the Ramadoha was overflowing with kshatriya blood. Rather strangely, Ganesh became involved in the struggle and unfortunately on the wrong side. But he escaped by loosing nothing more than one of his tusks, whereby he came to be known as 'Ekadant'. Ultimately the earth became void of any warriors, the face of the earth—'urvitala' became 'nir-vira'—without any fighter. And now Bhargavrama decided to retire from the contest. Richika, his grandfather came down from the heavens to advise Parashurama to stop the blood-shed.

He decided to respect the opinion of his elders and before going back to his jungle abode planned to celebrate a sacrifice. Bhargavrama, through his triumph over the kshatriyas had become the Lord of the Earth and hence everything about the Yajnya was on a grand and magnificent scale. The Vedi or sacrificial altar was nine yards by nine and was constructed of solid gold. Kashyapa, the greatest and most learned sage of the time was the chief priest and to crown this stupendous affair, the 'dan' or gift that Parashurama gave to his priest was nothing less than the overlordship of the world. He then made known his intention of going back to the Mahendra mountain to resume his ascetic life. But Kashyapa told him bluntly that his hot temperament was a constant source of danger

to the peace of his land and therefore he should quit it—go anywhere outside the boundaries of 'his' kingdom! And Bhargavrama had to obey the command. He crossed the Narmada and ultimately reached the western coastal strip. Here, in a land which was of a rough nature, Parashurama established some of the earliest inhabitations. It was sometime during this period that the meeting between Bhargavrama and Dasharathi Rama, narrated earlier, took place.

Kashyapa on his part accepted without murmur the dana from Parashurama but never knew what to do with it. He was a poor old Brahmin who had spent his entire life in learning and teaching and was ignorant of even the ABC of statecraft. Thus a situation arose in which there was no government. Those whose business it was to rule were vanquished and the victors were no administrators. Near chaotic conditions prevailed when Earth approached Kashyapa and told him that this state of affairs could not last long. There must be somebody to rule the world. The brahmin explained to her the difficulty he was facing. He well understood the importance of having government for the people but he was absolutely helpless in the matter as there were no kshatriyas alive! The Earth informed him that there were some kshatriyas who were still alive. They were no doubt in hiding for fear of Parashurama's vengeance but now as the danger had passed Kashyapa might approach them and persuade them to come back and resume their tasks. And she knew where he would find them. The scions of the famous dynasties such as the Purus, the Shibis were protected by their female folk. Kashyapa immediately found them out and brought them back honourably to their former capitals and with a great sigh of relief restored power where it legitimately belonged. Soon everything became normal and peace and harmony prevailed throughout the land.

Back in his ashram, Parashurama resumed his role as a teacher and preacher. As already mentioned he was more proficient in the trades of war than of peace, in the astra and shastra vidyas rather than the philosophic and ritualistic aspects of life. Amongst those who became the disciples of Parashurama were such illustrious persons like Dronacharya, the famous tutor of the Kauravas and the Pandavas. He learnt from Parashurama the tricks of the art of archery. Bhishma, another giant of the Bharatiya war, was a pupil of this very sage. Karna also went there to learn battle-craft. But the great warrior played a small trick on the old sage that ultimately brought about his ruin. He told the Guru that he was a brahmin, but truth could not be suppressed for long. Once, Parashurama, to test the bhakti of his shishya lay down and rested his head in Karna's lap. When the old man was fast asleep, a bee stung Karna and to his great discomfort kept biting again and again. It was a painful procedure but Karna kept still lest his Guru might be disturbed. After some time the old man woke up to find the blood-soaked leg of his pupil. He immediately realised that this young man, to be so indifferent to his suffering, must have been none else than a kshatriya. On inquiry the truth came out and then he burst into flames of rage. He told Karna that he had cheated his Guru and hence whatever Vidya he had received from him would be fruitless when really required. And everybody knows the result. Karna forgot his mantras and astras at the most critical moment and lost his life. On one occasion this hot tempered Guru challenged his own disciple Bhishma to a fight—the latter proving to be better than his Guru.

While this work was going on, Parashurama often departed from his self imposed banishment and acted to help some divine cause. Thus one finds him guiding and helping Shri Krishna and Balarama in their struggle against Jara-

sandha. The two brothers escaped from Mathura to the Sahyadris with a view to take refuge in Karavirnagar. But it was Bhargavrama who took them to the Gomantak hills, a spot strategically more suited to the purpose of Krishna and Balarama and thus contributed to their victory.

After the *Mahabharat* there are practically no occasions to come across Parashurama. The great warrior is variously mentioned to be living on the Mahendra mountain, the Sahyagiri and the Shurparak nagar. The story goes that the region west of the Sahyadris was under the regime of 'Sea' and he was most unwilling to allow any intruder to set his foot on his kingdom. In the best traditions of the warrior monarchs he challenged Parashurama, who not the least deterred from this opposition immediately drew his bow and arrows. Not more than half a dozen deliveries from the deadly weapon were enough to convince the Sea that resistance was hopeless and he agreed to permit Parashurama and his followers to settle in his territory. The sea accordingly receded several miles and land became inhabitable, though it must be said by no means hospitable.

Most legends agree with the story that he retired from the active life of the northern plains and withdrew to the western coast to encourage and help the habitation of, presumably the Aryan tribes along that region. Scholars speculate about whether the name Parashu has anything to do with Persia and whether Parashurama was in fact the leader of several tribes that emigrated from Persia for one cause or another and settled on the western coast, like the Parsees who followed a similar course several centuries later, but unlike the latter adopting totally and fully the religious and social system of their adopted land. Still others maintain that he led his followers from the northern plains of India itself to settle in this region. However, all these are conjectures and would remain so as long as

our knowledge of the successive migrations in this continent remains as fragmentary as it is today. One thing is certain that the Parashurama legend has preserved, albeit in a distorted manner, the memories of a great tribal feud and a resultant resettlement and rehabilitation of one tribe, and that this had something to do with the western coast of the peninsula. This special relation between the Konkan area and Malabar coastline is a common cultural and legendary heritage of the present day inhabitants of that land. Right from the northern most point of the stripe, Broach, to the southern most points—Kerala and Kanya Kumari, people everywhere revere and worship this pioneer. In the Malabar even a 'shaka' known after Parashurama is still in use. Temples for him are erected at various places. In the region known as Konkan which is a part of Maharashtra, the most important or perhaps the only shrine dedicated to him is at Pedhe near Chiplun in the Ratnagiri district.

The name of the village is Pedhe, but is popularly known as kshetra Parashurama. It is situated on the top of a hill. The village is some five miles from Chiplun from where a regular bus service, run by the State Transport, is available. A short cut which reduces the distance by about a mile and half exists, but it is a rather stiff walk. The temple forms the focal point of the village. It is a large rectangular enclosure surrounded by brick and stone walls pierced by arched gateways. The eastern gateway is the biggest and a drum-house, i.e. a nagarkhana surmounts it. The temple is a very simple affair architecturally. The plan is formed by a sabhamandap, the easternmost part of the scheme, a central mandap, and a garbhagriha. The latter and the central mandap belong to the Yadav order and it is quite likely that it is an early medieval construction although the roofs etc. are parts of a renovation scheme. The roofs are plain cones and are the

least artistic creations. The garbhagriha is quite dark, and houses three idols together. The central one is that of Parashurama, and to his right is that of Kala and to his left is Kama. All are four-armed images and carry their weapons with them. The central image is important iconographically, the lower right hand is in the 'abhaya' mudra, the upper right carries an arrow, the upper left a bow, and the lower left a parashu or battle-axe. Neither iconographically nor from the viewpoint of legends have the images of Kala and Kama any relation whatever with that of Parashurama. One does not know how or why they were brought here in association with Parashurama. These images were installed in 1779 A.D. by one Parachure from Guhagar near Chiplun. Before the images were installed a rock was worshipped on the same spot as a 'swayambhu' image of the god.

Coming out of the temple one finds in the same courtyard a small Hanuman temple in front of the main shrine. To the north is a small Ganesh shrine that houses a Ganesh image with the trunk turned towards the right and a female image locally known as that of Ganga. Behind the Parashurama temple there is a small structure devoted to Renuka his mother. Nearby is a kund known as Banaganga, supposedly created by Parashurama with his arrow-Bana. This is all that the enclosure contains.

When the temple was first established here no one knows. A very popular tale can, however, be recounted. This spot was a jungle used for grazing cattle. One day it so happened that a cow stood over a particular spot and let her milk flow down on it. This was repeated day after day. This greatly puzzled the cowherds. Then a person saw a dream in which Parashurama appeared and informed him that he was staying in a 'gupt' or secret non-visible from at the spot. The spot was then onwards worshipped by some devotees. It is known that there was no image on

the particular place till the Parachure mentioned above placed it there. The credit of having erected a temple to this deity goes according to legend to a Moslem princess. It is stated that around 1400 A. D. some princess of the Adil Shahi dynasty has dispatched a flotilla of merchant ships loaded with a valuable cargo. News reached her that powerful gales had set in on the high seas. She was naturally greatly worried. She had heard the story of how Parushurama had cowed down the sea and decided to appeal to him to come to the rescue of her ships. The cargo came out unhurt from the storms and the princess out of gratitude erected the temple. Now, the story, as it goes, is quite good, but unfortunately at variance with history. The Adil Shahi dynasty did not come into existence before 1490 A.D. May be, the incident took place with regard to some Moslem merchant, whose wife, quite probably being a convert, had recourse to a navas to Parashurama and later on the name of the Adil Shahis was brought into it.

Some Marathi chroniclers mention that Shivaji had visited the temple before 1674—when he was crowned as a monarch. One Govind Anant Joshi acted as an upadhyaya on this occasion and Shivaji made a grant towards the regular expenses of the temple.

The later history of the temple was as turbulent as the life of the god himself. And the cause of the struggle was not quite dissimilar. Formerly it was the kshatriyas who had created the trouble, now it was the Yavans. Then it was Bhargavrama who had come to the rescue of the oppressed, now it was a person of an equally strong determination that came to the rescue of Parashurama. His name was Brahmendra Swami. Although this Swami was no soldier himself, he had disciples who could very well stand comparison with the ancient Dronas and Karnas in bravery and skill. Hence unlike the god he worshipped, it was

indirectly, through his disciples, that Brahmendra Swami launched and won the struggle. One more point of comparison may also be stressed. In spite of repeated victories Parashurama deemed it wise to leave the uneasy land and settle somewhere else. The Swami like him, in the later years of his life thought it better to leave this hard won kshetra and stay elsewhere—in this case at Dhavadshi, a small village near Satara. This is a story of Moslem persecution and a strong Hindu counteraction.

This Brahmendra Swami was a Sanyasin who had spent a great deal of his early years in meditation and pilgrimage. He belonged to Rajuri and as such his devotion was as a matter of course directed towards Ganesh. Later on while on one of his wandering missions he happened to cross the jungles near Pedhe. He found a spot there that was most suitable for thinking and meditation. Around the beginning of the eighteenth century the Swami visited the Parashurama shrine and was pained to see its dilapidated condition. He decided to renovate the place. And collecting funds for this renovation became one of his chief aims. Here it might be mentioned that the Swami took great interest in this kind of work at other places also and had contributed substantially towards the reconstruction of the Bhuleshvar shrine at Yavat and the Ganesh temple at Rajuri The work of reconstruction of the Parashurama shrine started on the Pratipada of the month of Ashvin of the saka year 1631 i.e. 1709 A.D. Apart from the repairs to the original stone structure he caused to be built a timber sabhamandap in its front. Some dipamalas were also built. Aisles were constructed inside the surrounding walls. The Renuka temple owes its existence to the Swami. A local legend recollects a vow that the Swami had once taken before Renuka. He was suffering from some ailment of his eyes. He begged that he be cured and in return he would

erect a temple to her. He was cured of his disease and he fulfilled his promise promptly.

The temple however, was in too close a proximity to the Siddis of Janjira for its safety. Those rulers were a fanatical lot and could not tolerate the rejuvenation of a Hindu shrine so near their domains. The Swami moreover, was a man interested not in religion alone. He was the spiritual teacher and Guru of Chhatrapati Shahu and his Peshwa Bajirao Balaji. The illustrious brother of the latter, Chimnaji Appa, was also a disciple of the Swami. And the Swami liked very much to dabble in the material affairs of his shishyas. He took great interest in the current political affairs and was never an unwilling adviser—whether the advice was welcome or otherwise. This increased the complications as far as the kshetra was concerned. It was famous as the creation of the Swami and if he was to be hurt, an attack on the Parashurama kshetra and its desecration was an ideal project. The aggressive ventures of the Siddis increased in boldness and frequency and ultimately the Swami thought it advisable to leave the place and go to some safer place. However, he was all the way worried about the safety of the kshetra and did whatever he could to ensure it. For more than a decade there was nobody to worship and look after the deity. One Shivabhat Patankar approached the Admiral of the Marathas, Tulaji Angre, and secured some cach annual grants for meeting the expenses of the daily worship and other rituals of the shrine. This grant came in the form of a Sanad from the Angre's authorising the collection of two rupees from each village from the Dabhol division. Later on it became evident that some villages considered even this tax, that had now come to be called 'Bhargavpatti', to be too heavy. Hence it was decided to levy one anna on every Hindu family from each village. Originally this was a compulsory tax. Later on after the Peshwa rule had come to an end, for a good many

years the British administrators considered this a regular tax and records show various orders passed by British district authorities directing the recipients of the notices to pay the levy and any arrears immediately. But in the year 1847 A.D. the then Governor of Bombay seems to have reconsidered the question and declared that his Bhargavpatti was no longer obligatory. This reduced the levy to the status of a voluntary grant made to the temple. Even then a handsome amount was collected till some years back. Recently however, the revenues from this head have fallen to zero. Just as the Angres had made a grant of this Bhargavpatti the Peshwa Nanasahib gave the village of Tolkhurd in the Rajapuri division as an Inam grant to the shrine. This was in 1754 A.D. The Peshwa also aided the repair work necessary and in fulfilment of a vow taken by this lieutenant, one Ramachandra Ganesh, caused to be erected a drumhouse, a nagarkhana, above the gateway and made an additional grant of twelve hundred rupees to meet the expenses of the chaughada, the band of musicians maintained for the service of the god. Very recent legislation has aflected the shrine rather adversely and the kshetra which was never rich is now in a most unenviable condition.

The daily routine of rituals begins at five in the morning when the beat of the drum heralds the dawn of a new day. The god is bathed and worshipped. At eight o'clock in the morning a boom from the gun announces the time for the morning 'dhuparati'. This gun is an unusual feature in temple routine in this part, although it is quite in keeping with the nature of the warrior god. By eleven the main worship is performed after which the presentation of the Mahanaivedya takes place. Music is played from the drum-house while this session is going on. The image is then dressed and decked out in garlands and bouquets of flowers. The presentation of the naivedya in

the evening again occasions the beat of the drum. By eight is the palanquin procession, that circumambulates the temple and visits the surrounding deities en route. The gun fires a blast to proclaim this procession.

The most important festival observed here is that of the birth anniversary—jayanti of Parashurama. This falls on the third day of the first or Shuddha half of the month of Vaishakha. This day is known as the Akshayyatritiya. The celebrations start from the first day of the month. Hundreds of devotees gather together from all over the Konkan area. To accommodate all these guests, large pandals are erected inside the courtyard and on the areas near it. The first day or Pratipada begins as usual, but instead of the usual arati, abhisheka is performed on the image. After this is over, a music concert is held in the Sabhamandap. Singers and instrumentalists from the nearby areas flock here and perform before the deity. This is considered to be a kind of service, 'seva' or worship of the god. The number of artists that come here is surprisingly large and the quality is by no means low. While the musical performances are going on, the managers of the festival are busy distributing foodgrains and alms to the sadhus and sanyasins that might have come to attend the ceremony. The afternoon worship session is the same as usual. After the presentation of the mahanaivedya, meals are served to the priests. In the sabhamandap a special throne-like seat known as the 'makhar' is erected. This makhar is a miniature pavilion, the chief components of which are the cusped arches and cypress pillars. In the evening the image is brought out of the garbhagriha and placed in this makhar, to preside over the concert that is to follow. For this also, persons well-versed in the art of performing kirtans attend in large numbers. Then at eight the palanquin procession is taken out in great pomp. To round off the day's proceedings another kirtan takes place.

On the next day the programme is not quite dissimilar to that of the first day. The only difference is that the feast is attended by many more persons than before. In the evening the Janmotsava or birth day celebrations take place. At this time the chief kirtan takes place. The rest of the programme except the evening janmotsava is repeated on the third day also. However, on this day the evening procession is much bigger and more colourful than usual. A huge crowd is present and the palanquin moves around the shrine five times instead of once. A band of musicians accompanies the procession. By around midnight this procession popularly known as Chhabina in Marathi comes to an end. Then again a series of kirtans takes place. Anybody who has not got an opportunity to perform till then is now welcome. When this is over, the 'lalit' begins. The lalit is a sort of a rustic drama depicting the various incarnations of the gods or representing some mythological tales. This is a very popular feature and a large number of people are present to witness it in spite of the fact that it begins somewhere at four or four-thirty in the early morning.

The day next in importance to the jayanti of Parashurama is the sixth day of the month of Magha. This day commemorates the installation of the present images in the temple. In a way this also is a jayanti or anniversary. The Ganesh festival that falls on the fourth day of the month of Bhadrapad is also quite popular over the place. The death anniversary of Brahmendra Swami, the person to whom the credit for the restoration of the shrine goes, is also celebrated in a fitting manner. The Shivaratri fair is also quite considerable. The programmes of all these celebrations are not much different, kirtans, singing and bhajans dominating the scene.

The kshetra is a very small village and cannot accommodate outside visitors in any great numbers. The

best course for a visitor is to stay at Chiplun which is a fairly large town and from there visit the kshetra. Unlike other kshetras there are no fixed or graded rates for rituals and worships and the place is free of greedy pandyas. The natural surroundings are most scenic, the atmosphere is peaceful and the place in all respects befits a retired man of action that Parashurama is !

महाकोप अग्नी ऋषी जामदग्नी । समर्था तया जाणिजे सर्व सूज्ञी ।
सदा सर्वदा घेतसे नाम तुझे । वसिष्ठा स्वभावेचि हे गोत्र माझ ।
वसे सागराचे तीरी सूत तुझा । समाचार तो घेत नाहीच माझा ।
तयाला बहूतापरी सीकवावे । स्वभावेचि वाटेल ऐसे करावे ।
किती एक मागे बहू युद्ध केले । किती वेळ या ब्राह्मणा राज्य दिल्हे ।
अकस्मात स।मर्थ्य ते काय झाले । युगासारिखे काय नेणो विझाले ।
चिरंजीव आहेस ऐसी वदंती । समर्था तुझे चित्त काठिण्य कीती ।
तुझे नामधारी तुला हे कळेना । कृपाळूपणे चित्त कैसे वळेना ।
नको रे उदासीन हे वाक्य मानी । स्वभावे असावे बहु स्वाभिमानी ।
करावी दिनानाथ ह सत्यवाचा । तुला चिंतितो मी दास राघवाचा ।

The poems are presumably addressed by Swami Ramadas to Parashurama and also to his father and mother. The Swami mentions that he is connected with both the Vasishtha and the Jamadagni gotras. He mentions the various exploits of Parashurama such as the wars with the kshatriyas and the tussle with the sea. Lastly he addresses directly to Parashurama and enquires whether the story he has heard that the former was a Chiranjiva, an immortal soul, and that he always went to the rescue of his devotees was after all true. It is needless to say that this rather sharp reminder Ramadas has seen fit to deliver to Parashurama was occasioned by the peril in which religion had reached during Islamic rule. He had made a similar query with the Bhavani of Tuljapur.

The following is an arati or prayer of Parashurama. Like the verses of this type, the poet has recalled all the valorous deeds of the deity and requested him to favour him.

जमदग्निकुळभूषण मुक्ताफलदशना ।
अति सज्जन मनमोहन रजनीकरवदना ।
अगणित महिमा तूझा न कळे सुरगणा ।
वदतो कंठी वाणी सरसीरुहनयना ।।

जय राम जय राम जय भार्गवरामा ।
नीरांजन करुं तुजला परिपूर्णकामा ।। १ ।।

सह्याद्रि गिरीशिखरी शर घेऊनी येसी
सोडुनि शर पळवीसी पश्चिम जलधीसी
तुजसम रणधीर जगी न पडे दृष्टीसी
प्रताप तूझा थोर नकळे कवणासी ।। २ ।। जय राम०

तव कोप बहु बाणे संहारी
दानवहनन करुनी वससी गिरीशिखरी
क्षत्रिय मारुनी अवनी केली निर्वैरी
सात्त्विक राजस तामस त्रिगुणा उद्धारी ।। ३ ।।

दृढभावे तव वंदन करिती जे चरणी
त्याते भवभय नाही जववरि शशितरणी
शर मारुनि उद्भवली गंगा जनतरणी
चिंतामणी शरणागत निश्चित तव चरणी ।। ४ ।।

No one knows how many years, centuries or probably millenia have passed since the incident took place. But the memories of the great struggle and its aftermath still remain. It happened like this. There was an asur by name Tripura. An inordinately ambitious fellow, his sole aim in life became the conquest of the Universe. But unlike his predecessors and successors who pursued the same grand objective, he never launched himself on a 'blood and iron' course. Instead, he chose a path that was totally peaceful but made success practically certain. He undertook a severe penance. In the best traditions of the tapasvins he discarded even the ordinary necessities of life like food and water, not to speak of luxuries. With arms raised towards the sky he stood erect on the mountain Meru. He was fed by nothing more than air. Centuries passed by. But the rigid form on the mountaintop did not bend or break. Every passing moment added to his moral strength. And it soon reached a stage when it caused anxiety to the gods. They became apprehensive of Tripura's growing strength and warned their leader—Indra, about the danger. They also begged him to take immediate measures to ward off the impending calamity. Indra was, of course, giving thought to the problem, and various schemes suggested themselves to him. However, when he scrutinised the situation he found that Tripura had already won the first round of the battle—he had conquered the six enemies—the shadripus, namely kama, krodha, mada, matsara, lobha and moha, and as such his usual wiles were not likely to affect him. Tripura could not be lured into any kind of misdeed whatever. Indra had no other recourse but to approach Brahma for seeking relief. The grand old sage heard the complaint of the Lord of the Heavens and promised to arrange matters in a manner whereby his interests would be protected. Brahma forthwith proceeded to the spot where Tripura was continuing

his fierce tapa. Offering his blessings, Brahma said, "O Tripura, I am greatly pleased with your penance, ask whatever you want and thy wishes shall be fulfilled." The asur was quick to reply, as he knew very well what he wanted. His demands were three. He should be invincible to the gods and the demons, to the yakshas and the gandharvas. He should be able to travel throughout the Universe, through air and through water. His three 'puras' should be impregnable, but nothing should be unconquerable to him, not even Indra or his Amravati! "Granted" assured Brahma, but added that the asur would meet his death at the hands of a person who would be able to destroy the three puras with a single arrow. Tripura knew that this was an impossible thing to do and thus the boons made him a force invincible and unconquerable. His joy knew no bounds. After years of patience and suffering the great objective had been realised. He, Tripura, was the sole Lord of the Universe. This turned his head. The man who had chosen his path to success so wisely decided to do away with it when successful. He immediately launched on a campaign for the total subjugation of the Universe, ultimately defeated and dethroned Indra and made himself master of the three Lokas. His followers were more arrogant than himself and went about the task of establishing a truely 'asur' regime in right earnest. The Vedas and Vedic rites were discarded, Yajnyas discouraged, gods and brahmins dishonoured. People submerged themselves in drink and debauchery, wanton violence was rampant. Never before had dharma reached such a low ebb.

The gods and sages, striken with horror and sorrow decided to seek a way out through Shiva. Indra was their natural leader. Penance of an equally severe nature was now undertaken by the enemies of Tripura—Indra and his following of gods and rishis. Eventually gratified at the

devotion of the gods, Shiva made his appearance before them and offered his blessings. The Lord of the Heavens, in tones made humble by defeat and ignominy, begged Shiva to take up arms against Tripura and free the world from the clutches of that asur by slaying him. Shiva promised to take up the cudgels on their behalf if Indra proved his devotion by practising penance before his Jyotirlinga on the Sahyadris. Indra forthwith proceeded to that spot and started his second round of tapa. Shiva was now really pleased and once again appearing before Indra assured him that on the seventh day from then onwards he would kill Tripurasur.

The great god then assumed a gigantic form, mounted upon his vahan, nandi. Arming himself with Trishula and damaru he rode to battle, shining like a thousand suns. Enraged at the behaviour of the asur the great god was frequently tugging at his jatas. His great army of ganas and yoginis like Dakini and Shakini collected around him. Tripura learning of the impending invasion, prepared himself for the struggle and advanced towards Shiva who had now assumed the Bhima form and was on that count called Bhimashankar. The furore caused by the contesting armies was so great that the earth began to tremble violently, and Shesha had great difficulty in holding her on his head. The opening skirmishes were fierce, the earth receiving a bloodbath. Tripura could not tolerate the reverses his army suffered and dashed forward to strike against the principal enemy. So arrogant had he become through his previous successes that he did not hesitate to throw abuse and insult at the Lord of the Himalayas. The battle that ensued was without a precedent. Shiva launched one after the other his astras like parigha and trishula. The asur on his side sent numerous arrows. But the exchange was unfruitful as Shiva destroyed the missiles in mid-air. Tripura though

hurt by the trishula was not killed due to Brahmadeva's blessings. Then Tripura flew into the sky and sent down on Shiva a veritable rain of arrows and missiles. This caused a great havoc in the army of gods, many were hurt, some seriously, others fatally. Shiva was greatly infuriated at this turn of events and aimed his great trishula at the three puras of Tripura. That missile destroyed them in a single hit, clearing the way for the death of Tripurasur. The asur was slain by the flames that emanated from the third eye of Shiva. The battle was stiff and the issue long in suspense. Tripura fell and great was the relief and joy felt by the gods and sages.

Shankar, exhausted from the tussle, sat down, streams of sweat running down the body. The devas and rishis gathered around their hero and there ensued an unending hymn of praise and prayer. The god was greatly pleased at the destruction of the evil and offered to grant whatever boons the devas desired. The gods requested that he should permanently stay where he sat in his Bhima form and that the streams of sweat should turn into an eternal river. The river should be a giver of good—punya. The god kept his promise and agreed to have his abode at the spot as Bhimashankar. And the river was to be known as Bhimarathi. A dip in the holy waters of this river would wash away all sin and evil and bestow great good.

Situated on a hill of the Sahyadris from which deep gorges descend towards the Konkan strip, the temple of Bhimashankar and the kunds from which the river rises immortalise the great struggle and the triumph of good over evil.

The temple of Bhimashankar is an unfinished restoration of an old shrine. It is not very big, not larger than about forty-five feet by twenty. The garbhagriha and the antarala form a separate block. Then there is a space open to the sky. And then a portion of the older structure.

Entering from the outermost openings, one first comes to a small portico built of local trap. Its construction is arched but crude. Next to it, nearer the Shiva-ling is a mandap, rather one-third of a mandap. This also is an arched structure, now only the squinches remaining. The dome has either been removed to accomodate the new temple or has fallen down. Then is the open space—a space open to the sky as well as the sides. Here a nandi image is placed. The portion till now described belongs to a period earlier than that of the garbhagriha. In view of the nature of the arched construction it can be placed somewhere in the late seventeenth century or the early eighteenth. If the story of the original temple having been built by one Bhatirao, mentioned by the District Gazetteers is true, then two renovations of this shrine have to be envisaged. The legend about this earlier temple, as locally current is on the following lines.

It gives an account of how the ling appeared at the spot. The tale is mentioned here because it is most widely used. Practically for every important Shiva ling the same or a very similar story is related in this region. Once upon a time a man went to the jungles and as usual started felling trees—that being his profession. But the day was not quite usual. He raised his axe and struck against a tree and blood started gushing out from the cut. The wood-cutter was greatly bewildered and for a moment did not understand what to do. He had heard of similar tales in his own times and it then occurred to him to bring his cow and he milked her so that the milk fell on the cut. The blood stopped rushing out. Next day the fellow went to the place greatly apprehensive from the events of the previous day. But his apprehensions were groundless—a ling of Shiva had appeared at the spot where the tree stood. Overwhelmed at the occurrence, he became a devout bhakta of Shiva and erected a small

shrine over the ling. This incident is said to have taken place somewhere around 1350 A.D.

The next stage was the erection of a bigger shrine, complete with a square mandap and a portico in its front. This shrine might have fallen down or might have been left incomplete after the portico and the mandap were built. There is little doubt that the latter has been pulled down or has fallen of natural causes, its peculiarity as already stated, being its arched construction.

The construction of the garbhagriha and the antarala immediately in its front belong to a still later period the dates of which are known. Also built of the same local stone, which in this case is extremely well-dressed; this portion is built on the Indo-Aryan or Northern style, on the style of the Jaina temples. The artistic embellishments of the shrine consists of conventional ornamentation on piilars and doorframes and a carved band running on the outer wall at a height of about ten feet from the ground. The band consists of several human figures interspersed with images of some deities. These figures, especially their facial features and their costume resemble closely those of the figure sulpture on temples of the Indo-Aryan style in Maharashtra, especially from those at places like Nevase and Toke. Although simple in execution, the proportions and the shapes of various parts common to the Northern temples have bestowed a good deal of organic grace on it. Especially the curves of the shikhar are splendidly brought off and very few examples display such graceful outline. It might be mentioned in passing that this particular style of temple architecture was introduced in the Deccan from the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Those days took the Marathas to the North, especially to Rajasthan and Malwa, and from there they brought home this novel but extremely elegant pattern. At a number of places in Maharashtra like Nasik, Nevase, Toke etc. temples of this style sprang up. All of them were erected by persons who had seen service

in the North. The local style, known as Hemadpanti or Yadav style is quite distinct from either the Northern or the Southern styles. The Yadav style is no doubt nearer to the northern pattern, being just another idiom of the same basic concept. Even in the absence of any clear record on the point, it can be stated with a certain amount of certainty that the present temple of Bhimashankar is not earlier than 1750 A.D.; although the kshetra is definitely older.

Like most of the Shiva temples in this part, the floor of the garbhagriha is on a level much lower than the outside ground. The ling is in the centre, the Yoni being on floor-level, the ling projecting from it. Water is constantly dripping on it from the abhishekapatra hanging over it.

The temple is one of the numerous shrines that benefitted directly or indirectly from the Maratha rule. Large-scale renovation or reconstruction of the temple was undertaken. Two important bankers of Poona seem to be responsible for most of the reconstructions. An inscription in Marathi on the mandap of the temple states that it was constructed by one Chimanaji Antaji Bhide Naik, a famous banker and money-lender. The date is 1737 A.D. References in the diaries and correspondence of another banker family by name Dikshit-Patwardhan show that they were also contributing substantially towards the cost of the reconstruction work. They also caused to be built the tank near it around 1736. This patronage continued right up to the end of the Peshwa rule. Raghunathrao Peshwa constructed a well while the shikhar of the temple was completed by Nana Phadnavis at a cost of fifty thousand rupees. This definitely relates to the Indo-Aryan shrine as seen to-day. The earliest mention of a historical character about this kshetra comes from the time of Shivaji. He had granted the village of Kharosi to the temple. The daily worship was to be carried out from the revenues of this place. The

grant was confirmed and continued by the Peshwas. Apart from such grants and occasional aids from the government, individual devotees donated quite liberally to this temple. One Abhyankar from Nagar donated the costs of the daily rudra-ekadashini.

References to Bhimashankar and especially to Bhimarathi occur in literature dating back to the thirteenth century. Several passages from the writings of Marathi saints speak of the importance of this kshetra. These come from various sources but all are unanimous on one point. And that point is the great sancity of the shrine. A very logical inference, therefore, is that the shrine must have been popular and famous much before it was part of the common religious itinerary of any individual out for a pilgrimage. No less a personage, than Jnyaneshvar seems to have visited this place. His contemporary and fellow traveller, Namdev states that after having visited and worshipped the source of Godavari at Tryambakeshvar, Jnyaneshvar visited Bhimashankar, the source of Bhima or Chandrabhaga, as the river is known at Pandharpur. Namdev himself had visited the place. The inclusion of the Shiva temple at Bhimashankar in the list of a dozen most important Shivalings, the Jyotirlings, shows how sacred the place is. These twelve Jyotirlings are the Mallikarjuna at Shri Shaila, Somnath from Saurashtra, Mahankala from Ujjain, Mamaleshvar from Omkar Mandhata, Kedar on the Himalayas, Bhimashankar from the Dakini van (forests), Vishveshvar at Varanashi, Tryambakeshvar on the banks of the Godavari, Vaijnath at Parli, Nagesh from Darukavana, Ghrishneshvar at Verula and Rameshvar on the Setubandha, the extreme south of the great peninsula. The *Rudrasamhitas* have the following verses regarding the twelve Jyotirlings :

सौराष्ट्रे सोमनाथं च श्रीशैले मल्लिकार्जुनं ।
उज्जयिन्यां महाकालं ओंकारे ममलेश्वरम् ॥ १ ॥

हिमालये तु केदारं डाकिन्यां भीमशंकरम् ।
वाराणस्यां च विश्वेशं त्र्यंबकं गौतमीतटे ।। २ ।।
परल्यां वैद्यनाथं च नागेशं दारुकावने ।
सेतुबधे तु रामेशं घृष्णेशं च शिवालये ।। ३ ।।

Important as a Shaivite centre, Bhimashankar has a greater significance attached to it as the source of one of the holiest rivers of Maharashtra. A number of centres like Pandharpur and Ganagapur are situated on the banks of the ancient Bhimarathi. Shri Nrisimha Sarasvati had incuded a peregrination around the Bhimarathi in his 'tatak yatra', a pilgrimage of various holy rivers.

Besides the temple of Shiva there are certain other spots where a 'Yatrika' must go. He should not forget to worship and honour the ganas of Shiva like Shakini and Dakini who helped him in his victory over Tripurasur. At some distance from the Shiva shrine is a small temple dedicated to the goddess Kamalaja. The shrine is just near the bus stand. It is an extremely plain modern structure. Of brick and timber construction, it has a plan of a square shrine surrounded by a broad verandah on all sides. The whole is covered by a tiled roof. The image of the goddess is nothing more than a huge boulder painted over with vermilion. A silver plaque with the face of a goddess embossed on it is placed in front of this 'swayambhu' form. In front of this shrine stand two stone tigers, around them are several nandi images, a number of virgals of the late medieval period. Now this Kamalaja is none else than Gauri. How did she come here? Obviously in connection with the great deva-asur struggle. Apart from the destruction of Tripura, which was the main incident, there took place other deeds which were in no small degree responsible for the final victory of the gods. Shiva assumed his gigantic form and joined battle with Tripura. But the legions that the asur had collected round him were so vast and the mettle of

his warriors so tough that Shiva decided to call out Gaur to his aid. The goddess armed to her teeth, got on the ferocious lion that was her usual vahan and proceeded towards the battlefield. She exerted herself to such effect that the demonic troops ran helter-skelter in all directions and were not to be stopped by their leaders. In this desperate situation one Durghashasur, an asur of great bodily prowess and immense courage stepped forward. Sporting his huge 'gada' and 'shakti' the asur challenged the goddess to a battle. The shakti he hurled at the goddess was cut off in mid-air by her. Then he wielded his bow and showered her with arrows. The missiles had sharpened points that glistened in the sunshine creating an impression of torrential rains pouring on the goddess. This was rather too much for her. She decided to put an end to this nuisance, and she delivered a mighty blow of her fist on the chest of the asur. Down went the huge form of Durghash, blood gushing forth form his mouth. There was a great uproar in the demonic camp and retreat was prompt.

The gods hailed the valiant deed of the devi, and Brahma himself came down to congratulate her. Praise was showered on her and prayers were sung to please her. So glad was Brahmadeva that he offered her a worship consisting of lotus flowers. The goddess in her turn offered her boons to the gods. The latter wanted nothing more than that Gauri should continue to reside at the place alongside Shiva. They further asked that she be known as Kamalaja in view of the lotus worship Brahma had offered her. The devi gave her consent to the request and has since continued to stay there to add to the sanctity and prestige of the kshetra.

Turning to the other aspect of the kshetra, the source of the Bhimarathi, one comes across various kunds and tirths on the hill. The kund from which the river is

supposed to have taken off is at some distance from the temple, but the approach is not very good. The kund is a small rectangle five feet deep, built of stone. At the bottom a very small stream is seen trickling down. This thin drizzle dries out in the beginning of the summer season. The contrast between this Bhimarathi and the Bhimarathi with its vast beds at Pandharpur and Ganagapur inevitably comes to mind. But that is the way things are.

The river then emerges in the Mokshakund. The Bhima is supposed to be flowing in this kund, but the course is underground. This kund is practically immediately behind the Shiva shrine. It is a square tank approximately thirty feet by thirty and is built of stone masonry. A flight of steps leads down to the water, or water can be drawn by pulleys fixed on the sides. It is the usual custom prevalent at the place that a pilgrim first takes his bath here and then goes to the temple. A dip in this kund is supposed to liberate seven generations of the forefathers of a person from the ferrets of wordly sin and evil, and gives them eternal peace. This kund is the result of the great punya accumulated by a sage of old whose name was Kaushika. The sage and his wife stayed on this Bhimashankar hill practising penance. One day it so happened that a Brahmin by name Richika came to his ashram. He was a wandering mendicant. Kaushika received him most hospitably and enquired if he could do anything for Richika. The latter thereupon came out with his story. He had observed strict 'brahmacharya' and utilised his time in meditation and visiting various holy spots. His moral stature steadily grew until he was capable of moving through all the Lokas of the Universe, the Swarga. Bhu and Patala Lokas Once, while he was going about his way through the Patala or the Yamaloka, he heard strange moaning sounds. He recognised them as human voices and went about enquiring as to wherefrom they came. Nearby he found a dark pit, deep as a well, where

in a number of persons were seen standing in mid-air, without any visible support. Theywere wailing most sorrowfully. It was indeed a pitiable sight. Richika asked them the cause of their distress, whereupon he was told that they belonged to a single family, and their living descendant was a brahmachari. He naturally had no issue and on that count they could not attain moksha. The young mendicant felt sorry for them and tried to console them with some philosophical discourses. The men in the pit were not quite enthusiastic about it and asked him who he was. The reply was 'Richika'. "Oh, then you are yourself our curse! Richika, we are your own ancestors. Oh child why have you put us to this agony?" This was too great a shock to the young fellow, and he swooned of it. When he came to, they advised him not to curse himself but to approach the sage Kaushika at the famous kshetra of Bhimashankar. That sage would certainly show him a way out. It was thus that Richika had come to the ashram of the venerated sage. The old man took pity on the young fellow, dug a small kund in front of his ashram and poured some water in it from his kamandalu. Understanding full well the significance of this kund Bhimarathi rushed to the spot and soon it was overflowing. Kaushika then asked Richika to bathe himself in that kund and perform the shraddha rites of his forefathers. He did accordingly and his ancestors received moksha. The kund has retained this efficacy to this day!

Nearby is another kund, the Sarvatirth, and the shrine of the goddess Bhashitadevi. Then there is the Jnyankund which is supposed to have been created by Dattatreya. To the south of the Bhimashankar temple is the Kusharanya tirth. From this spot the Bhima changes the direction of her course and starts flowing towards the east.

To the east of the main shrine, nearly a mile or so from the Mokshakund is the Gupta-Bhimesh. The Bhima jumps a steep scrap into the valley below and falls upon the head of Shiva not unlike the Ganges. The ling at this

place is 'gupta' that is hidden, never to be seen by the eye. The approach to the spot passes through thick bushes and is quite stiff. The growth is so dense at places that very often wild beasts make it their hideout and hence nobody goes alone to this place which, apart from its religious and mythological significance, gives a real glimpse into the 'raudra', ferocious beauty of the Sahya mountains. A visit to this place is worth even for seeing the sight. The bare cliffs of the mountain, the darkish greenery around and the milky foam of the down-rushing Bhima are an enchanting scene.

The *Bhimashankar-mahatmya* mentions a story of the great power of this Gupta-Bhimesh. Its fame and repute had formerly reached the far corners of the land. Long ago there was a king by name Priyashva ruling in Nepal. The king was extremely powerful and engaged in constant warfare and aggression. In due course he conquered all the surrounding territory. It was in the best tradition of his kshatriya caste and there was obviously nothing wrong about his being so warlike. But he went a step further and resorted to loot and rapine, abducted hundreds of fair damsels. This revolting behaviour enraged the other princes who got together and attacked the king in great force. The monarch was defeated and fled for his life. He wandered through jungles and forests taking care to hide his true identity. The hardships of the life made him repent his actions and his sorrow knew no bounds. There was no hope from any quarter, he would have had to lead the remaining life a beggarly fugitive! In course of time he once happened to go to the ashram of Gomil, a great sage. The rishi heard his tale of woe and advised him to go and pray 'Gupta-Bhimesh'. The king weat to Bhimashankar and there prayed and worshipped the hidden ling. The god took pity on the repentant king and all his sins were wiped out, his kingdom restored.

There are three other tirths, 'krida-tirth', a spot selected by Shiva and Gauri for mirth and merriment; the

'vyagra-pada-tirth' and a tirth capable of removing barrenness.

The last point to be visited is the 'patanasthala', the great fall'. Situated some distance to the west of the temple, this is a steep gorge descending hundreds of feet in the valley. The local legend says that no one would be hurt even if he jumps down to the valley. This is because Shiva had given this boon to a pupil of Jabali, a famous rishi of old. The boon also assured him that all the sin of a pilgrim would be dissolved if he pays a visit to the 'patanasthala'. Be that as it may, one thing is certain. The point has great natural beauty and the story of how the 'fall' became famous is romantic in the extreme. It certainly is worth repetition for its own sake. This also comes from the *Bhimashankar-mahatmya*. Once upon a time there was a rishi, Jabali, who had his ashram near Bhimashankar. He used to perform daily, abhisheka with milk on the ling and had maintained a cow for that purpose. Some one of his pupils looked after the cow when she went out for grazing. There was a dear little calf to her who always followed its mother. One day the calf slipped and fell down in the valley below the hill. The cow leapt after her offspring to save it, The result was, both were dead. The pupil, who was supposed to be keeping an eye on the cow, realised rather late what had happened. He thought to himself that it was his neglect that had led to the cow's death. He was thus guilty of Govadha, a sin unspeakably horrible. He decided to follow the cow down the cliff and thus inflict self-punishment,—a prayashchitta. The young lad having made up his mind hurled himself from the hill-top. But instead of dashing against rocks and boulders he landed into the arms of a sturdy person. Greatly surpriscd at this. the pupil started to thank the stranger. The latter enquired about the cause of the action the young boy had taken and upon learning of it, changed himself into his true form. And who else could it be than Shiva himself ? By

the grace of god the cow and her little one became alive again. The boy then asked Shiva for a boon that no body should be hurt from a fall off this precipice.

Apart from these legends regarding the hill and the kshetra, the vicinity of the place is of great antiquarian interest. It is on the same range of hills as the Bhimashankar or Manmoda caves have been cut, the fort of Shivaneri erected. The whole area was inhabited by Buddhist monks and the number of their chaityas and vihars is great.

Bhimashankar is an extremely small village situated in a spacious gorge of a lofty hill. The only inhabitants of the place are the Gurav pujaries and brahmin attendants. It is seventy-four miles from Poona by road. State buses go there from Poona twice a week; during the Mahasivaratri festival, when there is a great fair at the place buses ply to and fro daily. The route from Poona occupies more than five hours of bus-journey. The road upto Manchar, a half-way house, is the Poona-Nasik road, and is in an excellent state, the bus gliding over it. But the latter half is through an extremely rough terrain. For nearly twelve miles after branching off towards the west from Manchar, it runs parallel to the river Ghodnadi. Then comes the steep ascent of the Pokhari ghat. As the bus winds its way through the pass the air becomes cooler and cooler and gradually the road enters thick jungles. For the last nine to ten miles the journey is by a road lined by trees and vines of all sorts, their green and reddish hues making for an appealing and refreshing sight. The road is closed during the five months of the rainy season, from the middle of June to the beginning of December; there is no vehicular traffic between Bhimashankar and the outer world. There is also a route from Karjat on the Poona-Bombay section of the Central railway. It is somewhere around twenty-two miles. It is accessible only on foot, is extremely tough and is used only during th

festival season. The local upadhyayas make arrangements for the lodging and boarding of pilgrims at small cost.

The daily worship of the god is performed three times. The first, or morning session is the one when kakadarati is recited. The mahapuja is at twelve o'clock when mahanaivedya is offered to the deity. The third one takes place at four in the afternoon. These worships are not very elaborate, the rite of ekadashini being the most important. It consists of reciting the Rudra mantras and abhisheka on the god. The most common rite a pilgrim performs here is this ekadashini. The upadhyaya does it for him, the cost being one rupee and twenty-five nP. Pujas costing five or ten rupees can be offered, but no graded rates exist as at other places. Only the rate of the ekadashini is fixed.

The Mahashivaratri attracts to the place hundreds of pilgrims from the surrounding villages and towns. Pilgrims usually stay here for three days, and live either in temporary hutments or in a dilapidated dharmashala near the village. A new dharmashala is under construction. During this fair a large number of shops are opened, offering all sorts of merchandise to the village folk. Water supply is plentiful and the natural setting is enchanting, the flora fresh from the rains. Of the observation points, the Konkan Kada is the most inviting. At some distance behind the Kamalaja temple, it offers an excellent panorama of the Konkan region. From under the feet of the observer deep gorges run down to meet the vast plains below.

The kshetra and its surroundings display the ruggedness and beauty of the Sahyadris and its dense jungles. It is a spot apt for the residence of a god representing the mighty, the raudra elements of nature.

लवथवती विक्राळा ब्रह्मांडी माळा
वीषे कंठ काळा त्रिनेत्री ज्वाळा

लावण्य सुन्दर मस्तकी बाळा
तेथुनिया जल निर्मळ वाहे झुळझुळा
जय देव जय देव जय श्रीशंकरा ।
आरती ओवाळूं तुज कर्पुरगौरा ।। १ ।।
कर्पुरगौर भोळा नयनी विशाळा
अर्धांगी पार्वती सुमनांच्या माळा
विभुतीचे उधळण शितीकंठ नीळा
ऐसा शंकर शोभे उमा वेल्हाळा ।। २ ।। जय देव०
देवी दैत्य सागरमंथन पैं केले
त्यामाजी अवचित हलाहल जे उठले
ते त्वा असुरपणे प्राशन केले
नीलकंठ नाम प्रसिद्ध झाले ।। ३ ।। जय देव०
व्याघ्रांबर फणिवरधर सुन्दर मदनारी
पंचानन मनमोहन मुनिजन सुखकारी
शतकोटीचे बीज वाचें उच्चारी
रघुकुलतिलक रामदासा अंतरी ।। ४ ।।

The above prayer and the one that follows have both come from the pen of Swami Ramadas. Both are mainly descriptive in nature. The first stanza of the above mentions the garlnad of skulls around Shiva's neck, his blue throat and the Ganga that rests on his head. The second one mentions the Dhyana or form with Uma on the side. The third one states that his throat has become blue-block on account of the Halahal poison that he drank; this Halahal came out of the sea when the devas and danavas were churning it. The last states that he was the destroyer of Kama, the god of Love; and the creator of the Universe—a Shaivite cōncept of Shiva as the one god responsible for everything. The Das, the disciple of Rama bows before Shiva who has all these attributes.

धवळे भोळे चक्रवर्ती । धवळे अलंकार शोभती ।
धवळे धाम उमापती । सदाचित्तीं चिंतावा ।।
धवळ्या जटा गंगाजळ । धवळा मयंक निर्मळ ।
धवळे कुंडलाचा लोळ । शंखमाल लोंबती ।।

धवली स्फटिकांची माळ । धवळे गळा उलथे व्याळ ।
धवळे हाती नरकपाळ । धवळा त्रिशूल शोभतसे ।।
धवळा सर्वांगे आपण । धवळे विभुतीचे लेपन ।
धवळे गात्र धवळे वसन । धवळे वाहन नंदीचे ।।
धवळे कैलास भुवन । धवळे मध्ये सिंहासन ।
धवळे शंकराचे ध्यान । दास चिंतन करीतसे ।।

This poem is a sort of allegory, The poet has equated the white snowy peaks of the Himalayas with Shiva and the various aspects of the god are described as being white.

पाहापाहा तुम्ही डोळा । माझा भोळा शंकर ।
ज्याचे देणे अवध्या सम । नाही विषम कोणासी ।
भावे तोषे कर्पुरगौर । हर हर वदता ।
ध्यान धरूनि स्मशानी । जपे रामनामा मनी ।
शंभूचे चरणावरी । सोळे मोनार नरहरी ।

This is an abhanga by Narahari Sonar, a Vaishnav saint belonging to the Sonar or goldsmith community. Here he describes Shiva as the one who favours all equally, without any discrimination, who is snow-white and whose abode is the 'smashan', the crematory.

आरोहण ज्याचे नंदीवरी । वामांकी शोभे गिरिजानारी ।
त्रिशूळ डमरू शंख कपाल । मस्तकी गंगा चंद्रभाल ।
अंकी षडानन गजवदन । सदा प्रसन्न ज्याचे ध्यान ।
भुते वेताळ शोभती । हर्षयुक्त उमापति ।
अंगी विभूति लेपन । सदा समाधी तल्लीन ।
मुखी रामनाम छंद । एका जनार्दनी परमानंद ।

This abhanga is by the famous Marathi saint Ekanath and is mainly iconographic in content. Shiva, who is seated on the Nandi, on whose left lap is seated Parvati, who carries the conch, damaru, trident and human skull in his arms, on whose head is Ganga, on whose forehead is the moon, and on whose lap are Shadanana-Gajavadana, is the source of supreme joy for the author. The aspect of this Shiva is always cheerful and around him are his followers—ganas, the bhutas and vetala. Ekanath respects this Shiva.

TRYAMBAKESHVAR

TRYAMBAK

TRYAMBAKESHVAR, a religious centre of all-India fame is significant in two ways. It is the abode and one of the twelve most select abodes at that, of Shiva. Secondly, it is the source of the Godavari river, one of the two holiest watercourses of Maharashtra, the other one being Bhima. The association of the two is a very usual feature of our religious system and it is difficult to say which one enjoys greater prestige than the other. Without entering into this problem, which would by its nature be subjective, a discussion of both could be profitably undertaken. Tryambakeshvar is situated in a small village known as Trimbak. It is some eighteen miles by road from Nasik. This is the only approach to the place. State Transport buses run to and fro constantly. During the festivals the service is increased multifold. Trimbak stands at an easterly spur of the Sahyadris. The road winds with many ups and down spast precipitious scarps of the Anjaneri ranges which continue till the semi-circular wall of hills is reached which incloses the village. The habitation of this village is comparatively recent. Only when the Peshwas devoted a great deal of attention to the shrine and the deity, did people start living here which was a wild spot before. The nearest habitation was the Anjaneri village, where the pilgrims stayed and came to the temple only for darshan and worship. During the later half of the seventeenth century, however, a large number of people made this their home and erected attractive mansions. Till recently the place exhibited some buildings with the typical 'period' facades of the Maratha times, consisting of wooden balconies with cypress pillars and cusped arches and a large amount of wood-carving. Many of these were of a

high artistic standard. With the decline of the Peshwa regime the sudden spurt in the prosperity of the village slackened considerably. But the town still maintains a facade of respectability.

For a pilgrim who is a stranger, the services of the kshetropadhyayas are quite useful. They entertain guests and help them in the performance of the various religious rites. Each kshetropadhyaya has a record in his family that has the names of his former guests and if by chance one's ancestors happen to have visited the kshetra and stayed with a certain family, that family alone would accept the person as a guest. A large number of dharmashalas are available, some of which rent out utensils also. But during festival seasons they are apt to be crowded. There are dharmashalas built castewise—available for persons belonging to particular communities only. Generally these managements do not allow a pilgrim to stay at these rest-houses for more than three days. Now a single day trip can be made to and from Tryambakeshvar from Nasik because of the regular transport available. Nasik itself is a well known holy place and has various establishments like rest houses and guest houses and lodges that take good care of the outsiders. A dip in the Kushavarta the darshan of Tryambakeshvar and of Ganga-dwara could be finished within a single day; but if a pilgrim is keen on performing the various prescribed vidhis and yatras he would find it convenient to halt at Tryambak itself.

Tryambakeshvar, that is, Shiva came at this place because of a curse from Brahmadeva. It happened like this. Brahmadeva and Vishnu were once discussing things. In the course of these talks the name of Shiva occurred. Now, although Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva belonged to the all-powerful trinity, none could claim either to have known or to have understood the true nature of the others. Thus Brahman told Vishnu that although he was responsible for all creation, he had not

understood fully what Shiva was. Vishnu on his part was equally frank and confessed that nor had he understood their colleague. This, both agreed, was not a very happy state of affairs. And therefore, it was decided to go and search for the head and feet—the adi and anta—of Shiva. Both started in opposite directions. They were aware that the task they had undertaken was not very easy, and was likely to consume a great deal of time and energy. Years passed by but neither was able to go anywhere near the objective. Brahmadeva lost his patience and decided to play a trick upon Vishnu. He went back and reported that he had at last discovered Shiva's head. He cited a cow and a Ketaki tree as witnesses. The gods, and Indra their Lord, were sceptical and went straight to Shiva-Loka to verify Brahma's statement. Now it transpired that Brahma had been no where around Shiva. Shiva told them that Brahmadeva had deceived them. He himself went very wild and uttered a curse against Brahma. Brahma would not be worshipped by anybody thenceforth. The Creator was in-dignant and gave a counter-curse that Shiva would be hurled down to the Bhu-Loka and would stay there in the form of a mountain. This mountain is none other than Brahmagiri, and is also known as Tryambak—three-eyed—giri and at its base Shiva is seen in a miniature form as Tryambakeshvar. After the initial wave of anger had passed a reconciliation took place and Shiva associated the name of Brahma with his mountain-form, hence the name Brahmagiri.

The temple of Tryambakeshvar Mahadev is a magnificent pile. Enclosed within a courtyard measuring some two hundred sixty by two hundred twenty feet, the temple is built in local black stone. On either side of the entrance are tall dipmalas with brackets of an artistic variety projecting from them. Next to these and in front of the temple is a small but extremely elegant structure— a small cupola, that houses the nandi, the vahan of the Lord.

Inside it, with the foreleg slightly raised is a marble image of the bull. The easternmost part of the shrine is the mandap, square on plan and of massive proportions. It has a door on each side. Each of these entrances (except the western that opens into the antarala) is covered by porches. These porches have seperate roofs but have the same entabulature and cornice as the mandap from which they project. The openings of these porches are ornamented by cusped arches and moulded pillars. The roof is formed of slabs rising in steps from the architrave. These slabs are curvilinear externally and each supports a discoid termination, the shape of which is related to that of the surmounting dome. Above the discoid terminations is a lotus-like finial which gives what grace it may to the flattened domes of these ponderous structures. The antarala, a small rectangular verandah intervenes between the mandap and garbhagriha. The garbhagriha is internally a square although externally it is a multi-cornered star. The deep vertical offsets and horizontal mouldings, and the far projecting cornices create memorable shade and light patterns and give a rich and massive appearance to this huge pile. Numerous figures of animals and human beings and yakshas and gods add to this chequered pattern. Running scrolls and small floral designs form parts of the sculptural wealth of the structure. Each pilaster-like projection has a niche in the centre, housing some image or the other. Above the garbhagriha rises a graceful spire with curvilinear outlines. Rows of kalash-like motifs decorate the corners. A giant amalaka surmounts the shikhar, the finial being a gift 'kalash'. Around the shikhar are clustered numerous miniature replicas of itself. This structure is the most elegant and complete specimen of the North Indian or Indo-Aryan style found in Maharashtra. It was caused to be built by the third Peshwa Balaji Bajirao (1740-1761) on the site of an older but much humbler shrine. It took nearly thirty-one years to complete

the structure and cost somewhere in the vicinity of sixteen lakhs of rupees.

Inside the garbhagriha the atmosphere is very calm and cool, darkness adding to the sombre tone. In the centre is a small depression always full of water and in this water is the swayambhu ling of Shiva. From a crack on the top of the ling water, that is, Ganga is constantly dripping forth. As the story goes sometimes flames emerge from the ling and sometimes deep thunders not unlike the roar of a lion ensue from it. A pot is constantly hanging from a chain over the ling, water drizzling on it drop by drop. This abhisheka goes on continuously. A golden mask is superimposed on the ling. It consists of five faces. A golden crown is placed on these heads. This golden crown was presented to the deity by Peshwa Sadashivarao Bhau, and the tale goes that it was brought from the treasures of the Delhi emperors, who had carried it away from the Mysore kings. There is a single-faced silver mask that is used for daily worship, while the golden one is used for ceremonial occasions. This is the darshan of one of the most famous Jyotirlings of this area, that a visitor gets. The impression of cool quientness that one receives in this garbhagriha is the most remarkable feature of the shrine.

The daily worship of the god takes place thrice a day. The puja at each of the sessions is rich and consists of mahanaivedya and abhisheka. The Peshwas had marked a sum of twelve thousand rupees a year to defray the cost of the daily Puja and naivedya. The successor governments have continued the grant and hence the worship and other rites are performed in the old manner. A silver mask is placed on the ling at the time of each worship. The routine worship at this place does not differ in any degree from those at other places and hence a repetition is needless. By ten o'clock in the evening the 'sheja-arati' takes place and the mask which is a substitute for an image at this place

is placed on a bed in the hall of mirrors, thereby signifying that the god is taking rest. This hall of mirrors was built by Sardar Vinchurkar of Poona. These Vinchurkars are also responsible for the golden kalash that surmounts the shikhar of the shrine. Music is played from the nagarkhana—drum-house—when the worship is going on and also in the early morning. Of the periodic rites, as against the daily ones, the 'Kushavarta snana' is the most important. Every Monday morning the mask is placed in a palanquin and ceremonially taken to the Kushavarta tirth. Musical accompaniment is of course there. The servants of the shrine, such as mace-bearers etc. lead the procession. On the tirth the image receives a ritual bath, after which it is brought back to the shrine and the routine daily rituals follow. In addition to Mondays on some other days also this palanquin procession is taken out. These days include some of the most important Hindu festivals like Dassera, Divali, Padava and some other days significant from the Shaivite point. These are the Shivaratris, the full-moon day of the month of Kartika etc. On all these occasions the great golden crown is placed on the image and several ornaments are also placed on it.

There are very few reliable historic references to this particular shrine that could be taken back to a period earlier than the eighteenth century. The vicinity of Tryambakeshvar, Godavari, Nasik, Panchvati etc. was well known from ancient times. The fort of Anjaneri was an important stronghold of the Abhir rulers and enjoyed great importance during the Maratha period. References to Brahmagiri are in abundance and are contained mostly in the literature of Marathi saints. This Brahmagiri was a centre of the Nath Sampradaya. Gorakhanath (Circa 1100-1200 A.D.), the founder of the Sampradaya had spent his early years in the caves and shelters of this mountain. All his meditation and the attainment of final knowledge had taken place in a cave—Gumpha—in the same hills.

Today a small crevice is pointed out as 'Gorakhagumpha', the abode of Gorakhanath. Gahininath, the pupil of Gorakhanath and next in standing to the founder had also stayed here several years. While this Gahininath was living here, one day a small frightened boy rushed into his cave. He was trying to hide from a big tiger he had seen and was one of the four children who had accompanied their father on the pradakshina of Brahmagiri. This young lad so impressed Gahininath that he asked the boy to stay with him. The boy did stay there and received spiritual attainment through Gahininath. The boy was none other than Nivrittinath, the elder brother and spiritual Guru of the famous Marathi saint Jnyaneshvar. The latter himself had in later years visited this source of Godavari or Gautami-Ganga, while on a pilgrimage of the tirths of the region. From here he went to Bhimashankar, as Namdev testifies in his well-known lyrics 'tirthavali'. The Patala-khand of the *Padma-purana* contains a chapter on Tryambaka-mahatmya. This *Padma-purana* is of an uncertain date, though it is roughly assigned to the late medieval period. And to make matters worse, all the editions of this Purana do not contain this Tryambak-mahatmya. A mahatmya of Godavari is found in the *Brahma-purana*, but there also date and authenticity are equally doubtful. As one comes downwards in time-scale and arrives at the end of the first half of the eighteenth century, references begin to appear that pertain directly to the shrine and deity of Tryambakeshvar. The Peshwas themselves and their several followers were great devotees of this god. Letters and other documents speak of various grants, donations and gifts to the temple. Though Tryambakeshvar is not famous as a deity of 'sakama-bhakti', some people did utter certain vows before the god and on fulfilment of their desires made various gifts to the deity. Amongst many such items donated, the golden Kalash of the temple, the silver mask, the bejewelled crown can be counted.

The other aspect or part of the kshetra is the river Godavari. As stated earlier it is from the Brahmagiri mountain that the river originates. There are numerous kunds and tanks through which the river ultimately emerges. There is a very long story as to how Godavari originated. It not only tells of how she came here but also indicates several commonly held beliefs. It is supposed, for example, to be part or amsha of Ganga, the heavenly river and even today the local population of Nasik refer to the river as Ganga and not as Godavari. The story also speaks of the great power the river has, it absolves all sin. Of course, the various stories mentioned are as trustworthy as legends go, but certainly indicate the great importance the river enjoys. Recent researches have shown that Godavari is one of the most ancient water courses of the area. Evidences of human habitation have been discovered from the Godavari-Pravara basin dating back to thousands of years. There is little wonder therefore, that such an important life-source should be defied and legends and myths woven around it. The legend goes somewhat as follows.

Brahmadeva once decided to perform a sacrifice. It was naturally a gigantic affair; all the gods and goddesses, princes and princesses of all the Lokas had gathered for the ceremony at Prayag. Learned sages and mendicants formed a large contingent of the guests. On the appointed day Brahmadeva struck his axe on the earth to lay the foundation of the vedi. His axe struck against something hard. He investigated and discovered a strong iron chest in the ground. Everybody became worried, but all were anxious to see what the chest contained. With the approval of Vishnu and Shiva, Brahma opened the box and to the amazement of all concerned there lay in it a young girl. This damsel was extraordinarily beautiful and her charms were too much even for Brahma himself not to speak of others. Each king and emperor in the congregation, each god and yaksha, each sage and mendicant was

now an aspirant to the girl's hand. Some of them were imprudent enough to start a wrangle over it then and there. Everybody forgot the original purpose—Brahma's yajnya—for which they had assembled, and busied himself on thinking and devising ways and means of winning the lady. A majority of them of course relied on the normal modes of wooing and courting, but others were not so sure of the efficacy of these means. They thought that force alone would lead them somewhere. Some firebrands drew their swords and bloodshed became imminent. By now Brahmadeva had gathered himself. He was afraid that this unforeseen contest would disrupt his sacrifice and addressed the assembled guests. He said that the number of those who were aspiring to marry the girl was large and an all-round blood-bath would lead nobody anywhere. So instead he would suggest a way out. There would be a competition, free for all, and the winner would get the prize. Whoever completed a pradakshina of the earth, circumambulated the earth fastest, would be married to the girl. The condition was stiff, but the prize matched it well and hence everybody set out to circle the earth on a signal from Brahmadeva. Some were walking fast preserving their strength for the final sprint, others had started on the doubles right from the beginning. The scene was most queer; kings, princes, gods, and sages trying to outrun each-other! One of the competitors was a sage named Gautama. He was not very good at this kind of exercise although he was well known for his yogic and spiritual attainments and after an initial burst of energy his steps slowed down considerably. He lagged behind the rest but had not lost all hopes. So he kept on moving. Now it so happened that while trodding his way in this manner he saw a cow giving birth to a calf. The cow was a 'kapila'—of black colour. Gautama immediately hastened to the spot and circumambulated the cow thrice. He then started back towards Brahmadeva and

this time he was doing it real fast. Brahmadeva saw the sage approach him, panting and puffing, but rather curiously from the direction opposite to the one from which he was expected! He felt sorry for the man. It was obvious that the learned fellow had dropped out of the race. But no, Gautama loudly declared that he had won the race, he had circled the earth. How could it be? Brahmadeva could not believe his own ears, he shook his head in utter disbelief. Gautama stated again, this time in a louder and clearer tone for the benefit of Brahma that he had won the race. Brahmadeva still hesitated. At this juncture a heavenly voice boomed out and declared that Gautama was in fact the winner. He had circled round a cow that was delivering a calf and this act of his amounted to a circumambulation of the earth. He should therefore, be married to the girl forthwith. Brahmadeva had little hesitation now in accepting Gautama's claims and he then and there gave away in marriage the girl to Gautama.

The rituals had hardly ended when the numerous contestants started returning one after the other. The gods were the first to arrive with the kings and the sages closely following. When all had reassembled Brahmadeva announced that the sage Gautama had won the race and along with it the much coveted hand of the fair lady. He also disclosed that the marriage had already taken place and invited everybody to bless the newly weds. The disappointment and fury of the gods new no limits. They had all along led the runners and Gautama was never seen anywhere near them and how could he be the winner? Nor had the kings seen him around them. The sages swore that many of them had marked Gautama dropping out of the race. This created a great furore and the leaders went to Brahma to ask for an explanation. The good old man had great difficulty in convincing the disgruntled crowd that Gautama was really the one to win the competition. However, most of them thought that it was a dirty trick and there was good deal

of ill-will now about the sage. The sage asked Brahma for a home that would be safe. The latter told him that Shiva was then residing on the Brahmagiri and the vicinity of the Lord would afford him a nice and comfortable home. Gautama and his wife then proceeded towards Brahmagiri and erected a small ashram on a suitable spot. And he lived happily thereafter—that should have been the end of the story. But this Gautama was destined to perform an act of great utility to the people at large and to some divine beings in particular and hence he had to face a grave crisis. The stage of action now shifted to the Kailas mountain. Here was the abode of Shiva and Parvati. Shiva had, as is well known, caught Ganga that came down from the heavens in his Jata-mukuta to prevent her from boring her way down to the patal-loka. This celestial lady was exceedidgly beautiful and charming, and Shiva could not resist her charms. He used to take her out of his jatas and make love to her when no one was around. If someone approached she could be easily hidden in the hair. This game went on for a long time. Once however, Parvati entered the place when Shiva was flirting with Ganga. On finding her husband thus secretly engaged in a romance, she turned about and walked off. She tried to control herself but found it impossible to nurse the secret too long. Then she called her son, Ganesh, aside and gave vent to her grievance. Had she not served her husband so well? He was dearer to her heart than anything else; she was as beautiful —even more so than the cursed Ganga; then why this dishonesty? Why this unfaithfulness? The young man was as furious as his mother and solemnly announced his intention of solving the crisis immediately. He would wait till his father was asleep and then cut off the huge jata-mukuta from his head—would that not oblige Ganga to leave him? Where would she stay and where could Shiva hide her then? He looked at his mother for approval, but to his consterna-

tion found that she had gone white with rage. She told him that he dare not touch the great Lord. She would never tolerate such a mischief played on her husband and moreover, had he ever thought of how Shiva would react when he found himself minus the jatas? Such a foolish course would ruin everyone. Whatever had to be done was to be achieved in a manner that would not arouse Shiva's suspicion.

This sharp rebuke brought Ganesh to his senses and then he promised his mother to find out a way of doing things in a less spectacular but safer manner. He thought of various schemes but discarded all, because it was impossible to deceive his father. Days passed by and his immobility invited a sharp reminder from the enraged mother. Soon however, a plan suggested itself to Ganesh. He was greatly pleased with himself. It would certainly satisfy his mother and at the same time avoid any possibility of arousing Shiva's suspicion. It would take a good deal of time, but was safe and was bound to succeed. He then invited Varuna to his aid, and decided to make use of Gautama in this game. Of course the age was not aware of anything, he was not to be ia the secret, but his great prestige was to be utilised. Ganesh requested Varuna to help him in his scheme. The latter was hesitant in the beginning because if by some mischance Shiva came to know of the plot to deprive him of Ganga, he was bound to curse all those party to it. Somehow Ganesh managed to dispel his fears and he accepted to play the role Ganesh might assign to him. What could he do? Well, he was to so arrange matters that there would be no rainfall anywhere on the earth except in the vicinity of the ashram of Gautama, that is, in and near the Tryambakeshvar area. How long? As long as Ganesh asked him to. Varuna kept his promise and for three years in succession the earth received no rains, excepting, of course, Gautama's ashram. The famine conditions created by the lack of any rains drove

all the sages and mendicants to desert their places and go in search for water and food and the only place where these things could be procured was Gautama's ashram. So gradually all the sages flocked to this place and Gautama found himself engrossed in the task of feeding these hungry souls. He could hardly find time for his daily rituals even. All his time was consumed by the task of sowing the rice seeds and harvesting the ready crops. He was kept busy through Varuna's favour because the land had gone so fertile that whatever he sowed in the morning he had to reap in the evening! The number of his 'guests' was already quite large. Amongst these learned people one shone forth by his brilliance and eloquence. A flowing white beard and confident manner stood him in good stead. Soon he was the leader of them all. Whatever Ganesh-rishi, for that was his name, told was accepted by all without murmur and everything was peacefully and harmoniously run. Gautama of course was all along tending the fields. One day while he was thus sitting under a tree guarding his crops, a big but thoroughly emaciated cow entered the field and started devouring the paddy. Gautama noticed her and went forward to drive her out of the field. He had a bunch of darbha grass in his hand and he threw it at the cow. The cow fell dead on the spot! Those who had observed the incident and Gautama himself were extremely surprised. But the facts were clear, Gautama had hit the cow with a darbha and the cow had died. He had committed the most horrible sin—Go-hatya, had stain a cow. And now all those who had flocked there to enjoy Gautama's hospitality, his labour and luck, decided to desert him. How could they accept food or water from such a grave sinner? Gautama pleaded that it was an unintentional act and was an unforeseen incident, but all in vain. The sages and mendicants would have no truck with one responsible for a cow's death. They advised Gautama to purify himself through appropriate prayaschitta —self-punishment, and only then they would return to his

ashram. What kind of a prayaschitta would absolve him of his sin? That was surely for Ganesh-rishi to say. His knowledge and learning would enable him to indicate the type of prayaschitta necessary. Gautama went to Ganesh-rishi. The old sage comforted Gautama by soothing words. Repentance was the most effective prayaschitta. But Gautama pleaded that he had done nothing that he would repent of. He never intended to kill the cow. Well then there was a way out, a sin was committed and the sinner had to absolve himself of it. There certainly was a way out. The celestial waters of Ganga were capable of removing the blot on Gautama. Why could not he go and request Shiva to send her down so that he could perform a snana in her waters? He enjoyed great prestige with Shiva and surely the Great Lord would not say 'no' to Gautama's request. Of course a stiff penance would facilitate matters greatly. Gautama accepted the wise suggestion and taking leave of the Rishi proceeded forthwith to the Brahmagiri. Here he started a tapa that was unequalled in severity. For some time he took nothing else than leaves for food, then he discarded that also and took nothing else than water. Soon he discarded that also and continued to keep body and soul together with nothing more than air, practised 'vayu-bhakshan'. This penance lasted for eighty-eight thousand years!

The news reached Ganga. She was most unwilling to leave her most enviable position and she decided to obstruct the rishi's penance. She employed a patent trick. There was a well-proven path of seducing the rishi. She sent several beautiful damsels to the rishi. They tried to attract him towards them. All their art in singing and dancing proved utterly futile, so were their wiles of enticing men useless. Nothing would budge the sage from his determination and concentration. Then Ganga decided to make a supreme effort. There was one Jatika, a maid-cum-companion of Ganga. The maid had several supernatural powers and was extremely fond of her mistress.

When she found Ganga uneasy, she offered to do whatever she could to relieve her anxiety. Ganga asked her to approach the sage in the form of his wife Ahalya and try to wreck the control the rishi had achieved over the physical pleasures. This was a rather preposterous thing to do. Because if the rishi would come to know of her real nature and purpose he was bound to curse her—even burn her on the spot. But Jatika was so confident of her abilities that she accepted the task. One day while the rishi was engrossed in meditation, this Jatika approached him in the form of Ahalya. The lady had just taken her bath, was looking very charming and attractive. Gautama glanced towards her and was taken aback to find the invitation that her eyes conveyed. It was most unusual for such a pious lady, for one who knew well what her husband wes striving after; this behaviour was quite extraordinary. How could she allow passion to overpower her commonsense? For a moment the rishi felt that passion and lust were overcoming his determination. But he brought himself under control and the very unusualness of the wife's behaviour made him think twice. He had resort to his supernatural powers—divyadrishti—and came to know that it was Jatika and not Ahalya that was enticing him. He was very angry with her and cursed her that she would be transformed into a river. Jatika prayed that she be excused and then Gautama slightly modified the curse. She would merge with Ganga when the latter would come down on the earth. In this manner Gautama's tapa proceeded.

Shiva was greatly pleased with the rishi and appeared before him. Gautama prostrated himself before the great Lord and begged that he be absolved of his sin and that for that purpose Ganga be sent down to the earth. Shiva immediately said 'tathastu', and ordered Ganga to come out of his jatas and go down to the earth. Ganga was most unwilling to be separated from the god and refused

to budge. Her appeals to Shiva were of no avail and Shiva told her that she had to go and help Gautama. Even then Ganga did not move! The god then loosened his jatas and thrashed them against a rock. Now Ganga had no recourse but to go. She then came down to the earth. The rock still bears the scars made by Shiva's jatas. This emergence of Ganga took place in the afternoon of a Monday and the day was the tenth day of the month of Magha. The year was 'Mandhata', and two hundred thousand years of the Krita Yuga had already passed. The emergence of Ganga was welcomed by the gods and rishis alike and after bestowing the boon on Gautama Shiva disappeared.

Ganesh and his mother Parvati were greatly satisfied as their stratagem had succeeded so well! But things did not run so smoothly for Gautama. No sooner Shiva disappeared than Ganga vanished. She had not reconciled herself to her separation from Shiva and was in no mood to oblige Gautama who had brought it about. The poor fellow had again to pray Ganga and beg her to reappear. Ganga was ultimately satisfied by Gautama's praise and appeared again. The spot on the Brahmagiri where Ganga emerged again is known as 'Ganga-dwara'. This place is to the west of the village and is situated on the Brahmagiri mountain, about half the height of the hill. One Karamasi from Maska in Cutch has caused to be constructed during the last quarter of the last century a flight of some seven hundred and fifty stone steps to make the ascent to this Ganga-dwara easy. This Ganga-dwara is one of the five most important tirths of the place. A small stream of water is constantly pouring down from a stone Gomukha. Above this Gomukha is a crude female image—the image of Ganga.

This Ganga-dwara is a very small tank and no rites like snana etc. can be performed here. Not far off from here is a small temple devoted to 'Kolhambika'. As the

name would indicate this a form of Parvati. When Ganga that is, Godavari started flowing in response to Gautama's prayers, one demon by name of Kolhasur opened his mouth and began gulping down all the water. Gautama was greatly distressed at this turn of events and made a desperate appeal to Parvati to rescue Ganga from the danger in which she had landed herself. Amba immediately tore down on the demon and after a brief but stiff struggle beheaded the demon. The head while falling down from the body uttered the words 'Shiva', 'Shiva' thrice. This of course indicated that he was a devotee of Shiva and Amba repented having slain a devotee of her husband. She therefore, offered any boon Kolhasur might ask for. Kolhasur requested that the devi should stay where she had gone to kill him and that his name be associated with hers; hence the name Kolhambika. Further downwards is the Varaha-tirth. After Ganga was released from the clutches of Kolhasur, she requested Gautama that he should take bath in her waters and absolve himself of his sin. That was the main reason why he had brought her down and it was then high time that he fulfilled his desire. But now Gautama was hesitant. He thought to himself that this Ganga was so greatly honoured by Shiva that he had placed her on his head and now how could be touch her with his feet? He naturally could not bathe in her waters. Again a contingency arose and again Gautama had recourse to an appeal to a god. This time it was Vishnu to whom he applied. The Lord of Vaikunth responded to Gautama's appeal and went to the Brahmagiri but told him that he was then busy with the task of punishing Hiranyaksh and would soon return to help the sage find a way out. Vishnu reappeared after some time, but in the form of a Varaha and took bath in this tirth. Hence the name Varaha tirth. However, Gautama's hesitation had so irritated Ganga that she again disappeared from view. Nearby are the Rama and Lakshmana kunds and a Rama temple erected by one

Ghanekar around 1858. At some distance from these tirths and kunds is the Gumpha or cave of Shri Gorakhanath referred to above.

Gautama all along had remained unabsolved! So he went in search of the river and scanned the whole of the vicinity of Brahmagiri. At the base of the hill, towards the south-west he again discovered Ganga and this time decided to prevent her from escaping from him. Hence he spread the kusha or darbha grass around the stream and threatened Ganga that if she disappeared again he would curse her. The former stayed and as she was bound down by kusha grass the name of this tirth is Kushavarta. Once Ganga was neatly secured, Gautama bathed himself in her waters and took the necessary 'prayaschittas' and was thus at last absolved of his sin. This Kushavarta tirth is a large rectangular reservoir measuring 94' by 85' and is situated in the midst of the village. Flights of steps lead down to the water from all four sides. On three sides, south, west, north, pillared aisels are erected around the tank. Each consists of thirteen cells built of highly ornate stone arches and cypress pillars. There is no structure on the eastern side and it affords the entrance to the tirth. It is this tirth on which all the religious rites at this kshetra are to be performed. The most elementary and the one which all the yatrikas perform is snana. Other rites like shraddha, kshaura, etc., are also done here only. There are numerous images around the tirth. The construction of the tirth, the aisles and connected buildings is the work of one Raoji Abaji Parnerkar. This Parnerkar was an accountant in the service of the Holkars of Indore. It was built around 1768, at a cost of five to six lakhs of rupees. Kushavarta is referred to as the Lord of the tirths, 'tirth-raja'. Tryambakeshvar, the chief deity of the kshetra is brought here for bathing every Monday. A dip in the tirth during the 'Simhastha' period is considered a great act of piety and is supposed to bestow the greatest 'punya' on the

yatrika. Legends state that during this period all the tirths of the Universe gather together in Kushavarta tirth, thus bestowing great power on its waters. This Simhastha Parvani comes every twelve years. Guru enters the Simha Rashi during this period.

Around the place are several tirths and kunds like the Bilva tirth, Indra-tirth, Vishvanath-tirth, Mukund-tirth, Prayag-tirth and so on. Of all these, two are most notable for their size and utility. First is the Gangasagar and other is the Gautamalaya. The Gangasagar is a large pond some 400′ by 300′ and is the main source of water supply to the town. The reservoir was built in 1678 by one Rajebahadur. Gautamalaya is larger still. It is situated to the south of the Tryambakeshvar shrine and measures 600′ by 400′. Some pandit from Jhansi is said to have built it. The people use its water for daily chores like washing and feeding cattle. To the east of the kshetra, at some distance is a small streamlet known as Ahalya. This is none else than the Jatika who was transformed into a river by Gautama—the confluence of Ahalya and Godavari is a highly sacred spot. The Purnas have classified the tirths at this place into two categories. The first one contains eight tirths, Ballal, Varanashi, Manikarnika, Gangasagar, Rama-Lakshmana, Shali, Kanchan and Ahalya-sangam. The texts ordain that for a proper completion of religious yatra, the vidhis or rites of snana, dana, shraddha etc. should be performed at each of these places. The second category that of Pancha-tirths, contains the Kushavarta, Ganga-dwara, Bilva, Nilaganga and Kankhal. A pilgrimage in conformity with accepted traditional rituals leads to complete salvation.

In addition to the tirths there are various temples and shrines at and near the village. The chief of these, that of Tryambakeshvar Mahadev is already described. There is a shrine devoted to Ganga. Here the object of worship is a gracefully cut image in white marble of Ganga-devi, esta-

blished in 1879. A big festival is held here during the month of Magha to celebrate 'Ganga-avatarana', the descent of Ganga. This event, as already noted, took place on the tenth day of the month of Magha. From the first day of the month to the tenth, apart from ceremonial worship, kirtans, recitation of mantras etc. take place. On the tenth day food is distributed and a great deal of lighting takes place. Then there are some other Shiva shrines like the Jareshvar, Kanchaneshvar, Tribhuvaneshvar, Kedarnath, Rameshvar, Gautameshvar, Kashivishvanath and so on. Each tirth has some shrine near it. There are also temples to Rama, Parashurama, Krishna, Balaji, Lakshmi-Narayana, Maruti etc. Each of these celebrates its annual festivals with pomp and fanfare. Most of these are constructed by rich devotees who have made provision for annual grants as well. The large number of tirths and shrines of this kshetra are indicative of the influence the kshetra enjoyed and enjoys even today.

The description of the kshetra would not be complete without a reference to the various maths or monasteries and samadhis. Apart from Nivrittinath, several other spiritualists like Brahmanand maharaj, Ram-Mahadev, Jagannathmaharaj, Mauni Baba, Aradhi maharaj etc. had made the vicinity of the kshetra their home. Samadhis of some of them and maths established by a few of these are still in existence at Tryambak. A rather unusual type of math is known as 'akhada'. These are the centres of several Orders of mendicants or sadhus such as Nirvani sadhus, Niranjani sadhus, Dasnami sadhus, Udasi sadhus, Nath-sampradayins etc. Some of these like the Dasnamis and Nirvanis go around in the digambar state—wear no clothes. They have their periodic festivals and sect deities. The Dasnamis worship Dattatreya, the Niranjanis venerate Skanda. The Udasis are devotees of Guru Nanak. The Nath sadhus as the name indicates are followers of the Nath sampradaya. These ascetics, many of whom are wandering,

form a very large section of the Simhastha fairs that gather here.

This is the aspect that the great Godavari river and its presiding deity, Tryambakeshvar present to the modern visitor.

दंड उमरू मंडित पीनाकपाणी
पाचामुख पंधरा डोळे
गळा नाजूक सीसाले
हिमालयाचा जामात
हाती शोभे सरळ गात
मस्तकीं वाहे गंगाजळ
कंठी शोभे हळाहळ
माथा मोठा जटाभार
अंगी फुंफती विखार
रामी रामदास स्वामी
चितीतसे अंतर्यामीं ।

This prayer by Ramadas mentions all the attributes of Shiva like the trishula, damaru, blue throat etc. but also states that he has five heads and fifteen eyes, a description pertaining probably to the mask at Tryambakeshvar, the description of which has already been given in the earlier pages.

जय जय त्र्यंबकराज गिरिजानाथा गंगाधरा हो
त्रिशूल पाणी शंभो नीलग्रीवा शशि शेखरा हो
वृषभारूढ फणिभूषण दशभुज पंचानन शंकरा हो
विभूति माळा जटा सुंदर गजचर्मांवरधर हो ।। १ ।।
पडिले गोहत्येचे पातक गौतम ऋषीच्या शिरी हो
त्याने तप मांडिले ध्याना आणुनी तुज अंतरी हो
प्रसन्न होऊनी त्याते स्नाना दिधली गोदावरी हो
औंदुबरमुळीं प्रकटे पावन त्रैलोक्याते करी हो ।। २ ।।
धन्य कुशावर्ताचा महिमा वाचे वर्णु किती हो
आणिकहि बहु तीर्थे गंगाद्वारादिक पर्वती हो
वंदन मार्जन करिता त्यांचे महादोष नासती हो
तुझिया दर्शनमात्रे प्राणी मुक्तीते पार्वती हो ।। ३ ।।

ब्रह्मगिरीची भावे ज्याला प्रदक्षिणा जरि घडे हो
तैं तैं काया कष्टे जंव जंव चरणी रुपति खडे हों
तंव तंव पुण्य विशेष किल्मिष अवघे त्याचे झडे हो
केवळ तो शिवरूपी काळ त्याच्या पाया पडे हो ।। ४ ।।
लावुनिया निजभचनी सकळहि पुरवीसी मनकामना हो
संतति संपति देसी अंती चुकविसी यमयातना हो
शिव शिव नाम जपता वाटे आनंद माझ्या मना हो ।
गोसावी नंदन विसरे संसार यातना हौ ।। ५ ।।

This prayer or arati is especially meant for the Tryambakeshvar deity. This Shiva is the husband of Girija, holds the Ganga on his head, has a blue throat, has the moon on the forehead, his vahan is the nandi, around his neck are cobras and his garment consists of the hide of an elephant. This is the content of the first verse. The second one gives a gist of the story of how Shiva gave Godavari to Gautama. The third one enumerates the various tirths at the kshetra like the Kushavarta and Ganga-dwara and assures the devotees that even the darshan and the sprinkling of the holy waters of these tirths on one's body would absolve one of all sin. The fourth one describes the benefits of the pradakshina of the Brahmagiri. The last one eulogises Shiva as the one who fulfils the desires of his devotees and assures them of Moksha. The poet is one Gosavinandan, the son of Gosavi, who forgets the worries of this world when he utters the name Shiva.

KHANDOBA

JEJURI

JEJURI, the foremost centre of the worship of Khandoba in Maharashtra, is some thirty miles to the south-east of Poona. It can be approached both by rail as well as by road. While the road leads one right into the heart of the village the railway station is more than a mile away from the village. The name of the station is Jejuri and is on the Poona-Bangalore track of the Southern railway. Usually bullock carts or bullock tongas are available at the station to take a visitor from the station to the village or the other way round. But as the route is lined by shade-giving trees and is not a very long one pilgrims prefer to walk down the distance. If of course, the visitor has a good deal of luggage with him he would have to depend on the local transport available. Some dharma-shalas are there and some of the temple-priests act as kshetro-padhyayas and entertain guests; but the darshan of the deities of the kshetra can be finished within one day and unless the visitor has to perform some navas rites etc. it is usually a one day trip from a place like Poona. The water supply at the place is scarce and this difficulty makes a longer stay rather inconvenient.

The kshetra consists of two separate shrines, one known as Karhe-pathar and the other as Gad-kot. The former is supposed to be the more ancient of the two. It is some four miles to the south-west of Jejuri proper, on the same range of hills as the Gad-kot but on a higher level than Jejuri. The gad-kot means a fort and this name has been given to the temple firstly because it stnnds atop a hill and secondly because it is enclosed within strong stone walls not unlike the ramparts of a fort.

The chief thoroughfare in the town is the one that leads to the foot of the hill. Two flights of steps have been constructed for the ascent on the hill, out of which the eastern one has long since fallen in disuse and only the northern one is used. Although the flight consists of steps of well-dressed stone, the ascent is by no means quite easy. However, it is relieved by various factors, the most important of which is the existence of a veritable forest of dipmalas around the steps and the numerous entrance arches that span over the route. There are nearly three hundred and fifty of these dipmalas on either side of the flight. The archways and the dipmalas are said to be gifts donated in fulfilment of vows—navasas—taken by the devotees of Khandoba. Most of the archways seem to belong to the Maratha period i.e. the eighteenth century. Similarly scattered around are several stone slabs bearing carvings of human figures either singly or in couples. These are known as virs and are memorial stones. At present many of them have been covered with 'sindur' (red-lead) and turned into images of this or that deity in whose name begging can be carried on.

After some distance is crossed a spot is shown where a pair of footprints is seen carved in stone. It is related that this spot represents the meeting place of Shivaji and his father Shahaji. Shahaji had placed his young son in charge of his jagirs in and around Poona and was himself busy in the south. He had not met his son for nearly a decade and decided to go to Poona to see him. On hearing the news Shivaji advanced up to Jejuri to welcome and honour his father, and the two met each other near the foot of the hill. The meeting is supposed to have taken place in 1662 A.D.

A little further up are small temples to Banai and Hegadi. Who these people are and how they came here is narrated later on. Suffice it to say here that they have

important parts to play in the various festivals that take place at this kshetra.

Just as one approaches the main gateway on either side are seen various stone images, some that of elephants others that of virs. On the right hand side of the gate is an object closely resembling a Shiva-ling around which a niche is built. This is known as the 'Savalakhacha bhunga' a bee worth a lakh and quarter rupees. There is an interesting story attached to it. It so happened that Aurangzeb in one of his campaigns in the Deccan attacked and conquered the fort of Daulat Mangal, the hill on which the present Bhuleshvar temple is located near Yavat. From that hill he saw the Jejuri shrine and decided to assault it with the object of desecrating it. Accordingly his soldiers marched against the town, climbed the hill and when they found the gateways closed against them decided to blow up the walls. They dug a small hole for putting dynamite into it near the spot where the Savalakhacha bhunga is situated. But something happened that was most unexpected and confounding. One after another hundreds of bees buzzed out of that hole and attacked the Moslem soldiers. The assault was so ferocious that they took to their heels. But the matter did not end there. For, the bees went after them wherever they went. The commanders of the troops then enquired with the Hindu mercenaries the meaning of this queer phenomenon. They were informed that Khandoba was a very hot tempered and vigilant deity and had punished them for their intention of desecrating his shrine. Now, if only something is done to appease him this 'air-raid' would stop, otherwise, the Moslems better choose their own course. The commanders went to Aurangazeb and informed him as to what had happened whereupon even that most zealous iconoclast agreed to and immediately presented a lakh and quarter rupees to the god. The bees disappeared but the Moslems were quick to the retreat.

Passing further on one enters the main enclosure of the shrine. The entire flat plateau above the hill is covered by a stone pavement in the centre of which stands the Khandoba shrine. The whole courtyard is surrounded by arched aisles on all sides, from which project in some directions highly ornate balconies with cypress pillars and cusped arches. Some of the aisles are open on all sides while in the case of some the outer side is closed by a wall. These aisles are excellent resting places for the visitor and are used as such. This enclosure has three gateways, towards the east, north and west. The western gateway opens on the route that leads to Karhe-pathar. The eastern one is always kept closed. The northern gate is the one through which a visitor gains admittance to the enclosure. This is an arched gateway over which a nagarkhana is constructed.

The temple faces the east. The outermost portion is an arched portico. This is a later addition to the original structure which must have consisted of only two parts, a square mandap and a garbhagriha. In this portico are hung some bells and along the walls rests a big 'khanda'—a sword, with a blade four feet long and four inches broad. This is an ayudha or attribute of the god. The mandap is styled after the Yadav order of temple architecture. In this mandap are seen two horses of stone, one with the image of Khandoba astride it, the other without. In the garbhagriha there is a square 'devaghar', a small shrine within a shrine, a niche like place. In this niche is a square yoni in which are two swayambhu lings, one that of Khandoba and the other representing Mhalsa, his consort. These are covered with silver masks. This is the chief object of veneration and worship at the place. In addition to this however, there are a number of pairs of Khandoba-Mhalsa images in the garbhagriha. Two are in silver and the third one in brass. As far as their

iconographical aspect goes all the three are quite similar. The image of Khandoba has a sword, trishula, damaru and a bowl. The Mhalsa images hold lotus flower or lotus buds in their hands. The pair standing in the centre was a gift from the Satara Chhatrapatis made in 1932. An inscription on the back side of the third pair of statues states that it was donated by Sharfoji Bhosale of Tanjore around 1725. There were some other pairs, one in gold and other in silver which were, along with some precious jewellery looted some twenty years back. In the wall behind these images is a seated image of Khandoba in stone. This also holds a sword, trishula, damaru and bowl in its hands. On either side are carved figures of female attendants known as Jogeshvaris. On the pedestal of this image the figure of a horse is carved, that being the vahan of the deity.

Coming out of the temple the first noticeable feature is a stone tortoise, plated with a brass sheet. Its diameter is twenty-eight feet. This tortoise is used as a 'rangashila', a platform from which kirtans, singing or dance concerts in honour of the god are performed. Next to it, opposite the temple is a small cell formerly used for performing the rite of 'Bagad'. Behind it and also facing the deity is a giant image of the demon Mani. It is carved in stone and is nine feet in height. On either side of these are tall dipmalas with elaborately carved brackets. There are certain other gods resident in the same prakara. There is a Mahadev known as Panchalingeshvar, a small temple of Tuljabhavani, a Ganesh shrine and so on. Very few of them seem to have either any iconographical or legendary connection with the chief object of worship at the kshetra.

Having finished the darshan and a round of the shrine one can go round to the Karhe-Pathar. For this he has to get out of the enclosure through the western gate. The path descends down for some time and then it enters into a

zigzag and up and down pattern that makes the journey to and fro rather tiresome. Karhe-Pathar has also a direct approach from the village. Instead of going to the town one has to walk down some one-and-a-half miles towards the west. From this point a small foot-track leads the way up to the Karhe-Pathar temple. This track is partially made of steps, partially of plain walk. The ascent to the temple takes about half-an-hour. The route from the Gad-kot to Karhe-Pathar has also a number of archways over it. Halfway up, a spot is shown known as 'ghodeuddan', the place from where the horse of Khandoba jumped to reach the Gad-kot. Long long ago there was a great devotee of the god who used to go and visit the shrine daily. The man grew old but never altered his routine of going to the Karhe-Pathar. One day as he was struggling up the hill the efforts became too much for him and he collapsed there. In his agony the thought that he could not visit his dear god never left him. This devotion of his moved the god who appeared on the spot to please him. Seated on a white charger the god assured the old man that he would come and stay on the lower hill that is, Gad-kot, so that his devotee would be spared a good deal of trouble. The horse jumped and descended on the Gad-kot. The old man hastened to the spot to find the two swayambhu lings there. The Karhe-Pathar is a small plateau in the midst of which stands the shrine, which is supposed to be the more ancient and as such the original centre here. This also consists of an arched portico a mandap and a garbhagriha. From its construction it seems the structure belongs to the eighteenth or late seventeenth century.

In the western wall of the garbhagriha is a niche in which there is a seated image of Khandoba. Iconographically it is a noteworthy piece. It is nearly three feet in height with legs crossed. In its four hands are held the customary sword, trishula, damaru and bowl. Of these

the bowl is of the same block of stone while the sword is of steel and the trishula and damaru in brass and are removable. On either side of the image are female attendants known as Balai and Jogeshvari. On the pedestal of this seated image are carved two heads, on the right that of Mani and on the left Malla. In front of this image, on the floor level are the lings of Khandoba and Mhalsa. As in the Gad-Kot temple here also exists a pair of brass images of Khandoba and Mhalsa. In front of the temple is a giant tortoise also used as a rangashila like that in the temple on the Gad-Kot. Around are small shrines of Hanuman, Rama, Shiva, and Hegadi Pradhan.

The tale about this being the older of the two shrines might be true or might not be so, but one thing is certain. From the times either structural or written records are available, it was the deity on the Gad-Kot that enjoyed primacy over its older rival.

Khandoba is what is known as a god of Sakama-bhakti i.e. he is supposed to fulfil whatever desires are expressed before him by the devotee. This god being essentially a god of the masses, the number of such vows taken and gifts made or other acts performed in fulfilment of such vows is very great. And the forms are varied. Devotees come here and ask for all sorts of things. Some are childless and pray the god that they get one. Others want money, still others desire a particular matrimonial alliance. All come and utter a vow before the god, if their desire is satisfied they would do such and such a thing. What is this such and such a thing? Of course anybody can offer anything but there are certain traditional forms through which this satisfaction of the deity is made. The most ordinary and now the most commonly used method is of making an offering—naivedya—of bread and cooked sweetened gram or mutton. Secondly a ceremonia worship can be offered. This envisages the payment of a ceretain amount to the priest who decks out the

image in ceremonial robes and ornaments and performs a worship consisting of more 'upacharas' than usual, in the name of the donor. So also food is served to the priests as another form of gift to the god, although rather indirect. Then there is the vow that on the fulfilment of the favour asked for the devotee would perform the rite of circumambulation so many times every day for so many days of the year. There is a form known as 'tali uchalne'. A dish is filled with dried coconut and haladi i.e. turmeric and is lifted three times over the head and the slogan 'khandobacha yelkot, sadanandacha yelkot' is repeated three times. Some people bind themselves to make a pilgrimage to this kshetra on some fixed days for so many months or years. Some carry jars filled with water and pour it on the image for a fixed number of days. concerts are held during the night in which the vaghes and muralis dance and sing devotional songs. As has been already mentioned some structure is built in or around the temple such as a dipmala or an archway or images of Khandoba or Mhalsa donated to the temple, in stone or metal, sometimes in precious metal. All these are milder forms of a navas and very similar forms would be found at other shrines. Now are to be narrated some practices with are either of a barbaric—aghori—nature or have affected the social structure to a considerable degree. Some years ago it was a custom to walk across a trench full of red-hot burning charcoal. A more horrible custom was to hang from a tall pole with a pointed book thrust in the back. This must have been an extremely painful procedure and a still more horrible scene to witness. This custom has been prevented by law now, although huge poles, chains and hooks still are seen in the vicinity of the temple, the grim relics of a bygone age. These customs horrible as they were did not affect the overall social fabric. But the custom of offering the child, born of a navas, to the service of the god had the most far-reaching consequences. These children had to spend their

entire lives in 'temple' service. The made children were known as Vaghes while the female ones were known as Muralis. Out of these, the custom of offering a child as a vaghya still continues but the custom of turning children into Muralis is now forbidden by law. In keeping with the nature of the Hindu society, very soon these vagheas and muralis were treated as a separate social caste group. The vaghes wear a distinctive dress, indicative of their profession. It consists of a leather bag containing halad, a bowl, a whip, an oil can, a small drum and a yellow scarf. These vaghes can and do marry amongst the castes from which they come and their children are not necessarily treated as vaghes. They can return to the normal social and professional fold. The profession of these vaghes is ministering in the performance of various rites at the temple, singing devotional songs or bhajans and above all begging. In the case of the female offsprings thus given away, the story is entirely different although it does not differ much from what has happened in similar circumstances in all civilizations and at all times They are turned into prostitutes. They may carry on the profession at that particular place or elsewhere in the name of the god, but they have no other alternative than leading the not very happy or honourable life of public women. Many of them with the necessary qualities, take to singing, or bhajan parties or straight-away join tamasha parties, a sort of rustic dramatic club. The offsprings of these muralis, in the nature of things, are illegitimate in the accepted sense of the term ; and commonly are not accepted by the caste to which their mothers belonged or to the caste-professions. The male off-springs either turn into vaghes or take to begging or join tamashas and try to eke out a living this way or the other. The fate of the female issues cannot be expected to be any different than that of their mothers. This practice is not quite dissimilar to the practice of 'Deva-dasis' prevalent in the Gomantak area. However, it

is not so widespread nor is it observed in the case of any other deity except Khandoba. Though at present very few people give away their children like this, those already doomed to that fate pose one of the many social problems facing the new State.

The daily worship of the deity is divided in three sessions. The first is in the early morning when the gods are woken up and arati is sung. Then is the afternoon worship, which is expected to be shodashopachari, consisting of sixteen rites. The final session takes place late in the evening, when singing of aratis is an important item. The dhuparati is taken round only to the Banai and Hegadi mentioned earlier, but to no other deities, and that too only in the afternoon.

The various festivals or utsavas of the god are extremely colourful and attract large numbers of pilgrims from all over Maharashtra. Every year, during the months of Chaitra, Shravan, Pausha and Magha, five days between the twelfth day of the first half, and the first day of the second fortnight are festival periods. The first ten days, especially the tenth, Vijayadashami, of Ashvain and the first six days of the month of Margashirsha, are also ceremonial occasions. Somavati amavasya that is a no-moon day that falls on Monday also is an occasion for a large fair. The full-moon day of Chaitra commemorates the day when Khandoba assumed his avatara for the annihilation of Mani and Malla. The full-moon day of Shravan is the day on which Malhari that is, Khandoba and Balai were married. Khandoba and Mhalsa were married on the full-moon day of Pausha at Pal in the Satara district. This Mhalsa celebrates her birthday on the full-moon day of Magha. The celebrations and rites on all the four occasions are not quite dissimilar. The consist of ceremonial worship, the arrival of various family deities in their palanquins, arrival of flagstaffs, singing and dance concerts in honour of the god. The actual marriage cere-

mony of Khandoba and his brides is celebrated at Naldrug and Pal respectively. Thousands of people flock together singing bhajans and shouting 'Sadanandacha yelkot' or 'Yelkot Malhari'. From historical times certain families enjoy precedence in the procession of the palanquins and flagstaffs. The palanquins are either local or come from other towns either on shoulders or even by train. Certain communities patronise particular occasions. For example the Kolis are more numerous on the Maghi full-moon day, while the number of Ramoshis is greater for the Pausha fair. In the early morning the palanquins, which contain the deities of so many families go to the Karha river. There they are bathed and worshipped. In the evening they proceed in a procession for the darshan of Khandoba. This is accompanied by several bands of musicians, bhajan parties and often a great display of fireworks takes place. The party reaches the temple by around eleven on the full-moon night. Having taken the darshan the people start climbing down the hill. Next day morning the flagstaffs are taken by procession to the Gad-Kot. Here the staffs of Khaires of Supa, Holams of Sangamner and the Holkars of Indore enjoy precedence. When all the staffs are gathered together in the courtyard of the temple, the staff are raised up so as to reach the shikhar of the shrine. As soon as this rite is over the trek downwards starts. Literally hundreds of staffs, small and big are brought by various families and places. All along several musical instruments like tasha, marpha, sanai, dapha are blaring a queer symphony: halad, the yellow powder is sprinkled so much that everything, the faces, ornaments, dresses, palanquins, even the street becomes yellow. The dances of muralis provide the entertainments that would be still required. There are certain additional features to some of these festivals. For example, on the occassion of the Pausha-yatra a very big market for donkeys is held near the plains of the Jejuri hills. Merchants

all the way from Saurashtra trek down to this bazar with large flocks of donkeys. Hundreds of these animals change hands during the yatra and it is perhaps the biggest 'donkey-exchange' held in western Maharashtra.

The Somavati amavasya comes every three months. The most recent festival –1961—had attracted around forty to fifty thousand pilgrims. During these festivals it is on the State buses that most people depend for their transport. For such local fairs, the Railways cannot naturally make special arrangements, nor is the problem that of a long distance transportation. Hence the main burden falls on the bus-service and it is to be mentioned that they do a tremendous job of hauling so many people to and fro quite efficiently. The chief feature of the day is the bath that the god is to take on the Karha river For that purpose the deity is to be brought down the hill in a palanquin. In the early morning after the first session of daily worship is over, people from the town, some of whom enjoy a hereditary right of performing certain functions in the ceremonial, go up the hill to the accompaniment of bands of musicians. The images of Khandoba and Mhalsa are placed in the palanquin and a very large procession starts its down-ward journey. The pace is extremely slow. Various bhajans and dance parties perform before the procession, necessarily holding up the advance. It is not before two or three in the afternoon that the palkhi comes down from the hill. Here immense quantities of dried coconut and halad are thrown over the palkhi turning everything yellow. From here it takes about two hours for the palkhi to reach the river Karha. It is placed on the banks of the river and the devotees bring water in their palms and pour it over the images. This goes on for some four or five hours when the homeward march begins. This is as slow as the downward trip. By ten o'clock it reaches the village and it is another three hours before the palanquin reaches the temple. The miling mass of humanity bathed in the yellow of halad

and shouting 'yelkot' 'yelkot' leaves a lasting impression on the onlooker.

The Margashirsha festival has its own peculiarities. The sixth day, Champashashthi is the chief day of the fair. On the evening of the fifth, a giant jar is taken out in procession from the temple. Accompanied by musical parties this jar or 'handa' as it is locally known is meant for collecting oil that is later on poured on the image of the god. As in the case of the palanquins and flagstaffs there are certain families that are the 'manakaris' who enjoy a special position. A drummer accompanies the handa and as soon as the procession comes near the house of one of these men he beat the drum and calls him out. On the third call the manakari comes out and pours his own share of oil in the jar. Others of course are all along putting their bits in it. After all the manakaris have finished their turns, a person belonging to the Ramoshi community puts a decorated stick in the pot to signify that the collection is stopped. The whole procession which is now considerably swollen by the addition of pilgrims from outside, starts its return march. The handa is carried back to the shrine and all the oil is poured on the image. Next day every family in the town offers a naivedya consisting of milk, curds and bananas to the deity. And then the fair breaks up.

The vijayadashami is a grand festival on which occasion the two images of Malhari, the one on the Karhe-Pathar and the other on Gad-kot meet each other. In the evening the images are placed in palanquins and they go to the meeting place. Bands of musicians bhajan parties, dance parties as usual accompany the palanquin. The gods descend down towards a central low area known as Ramana. Halad and dried coconut are distributed. Colourful fireworks take place, throughout the night displays of dances and music concerts are held before the gods. Numerous troupes coming from all over Maharashtra more often than

not consisting of vaghes and muralis, take part in these concerts. These are considered to be a service to the deity. The crowed gathered for the fair enjoys this displayed and music. In the morning the priests distribute prasad consisting of jowar and halad mixed together. This the recipients carry home and place in their grain-stores. The gods return to their respective abodes and the festival ends.

The historical references to the Khandoba of Jejuri do not go back to a date earlier than the fourteenth century. According to tradition the garbhagriha of the shrine was erected by one Virpala Virmalla in 1381 A.D. Next, one comes across this shrine in the early sixteenth century. Chaitanya Prabhu, the great Vaishnav saint of Bengal had toured Maharashtra in 1510-11 A.D. During the course of his journey he visited most of the then important religious centres Vaishnavite and otherwise. From Poona he went to Jejuri and after having visited the shrine came to know of the customs and life of the muralis. It seems he was able to persuade some of them to discontinue their practice of prostitution. But his stay was too short to uproot an evil that had clung to the social system so long. In 1635 one Ragho Mambaji from Khatav undertook the construction of the mandap and the aisles surrounding the courtyard. Large-scale building activity then seems to have been started by the middle of the eighteenth century. The names of various persons like Vittal Shivadev Vinchurkar, Malharrao Holkar, Raghuji Patil etc. appear in the numerous inscriptions that are found all over the hill, in connection with the construction of the temple and the additions to the main or subsidiary temples in the courtyard. These works were in progress for nearly fifty years. Tukoji Holkar caused to be built the surrounding enclosure and the archways of the Gad-kot and also a large reservoir of water near the village of Jejuri. Ahalyabai Holkar also made certain additions to the Gad-kot. In general, the

Holkar family of Indore seems to have taken keen interest and an active part in the enlargement and maintenance of the shrine and its surroundings. Perhaps the last great contribution to the wealth of the shrine came from Nana Phadnis. It happened thus. At the time of the assassination of Peshwa Narayan Rao, his wife Gangabai was pregnant. Nana took a vow before the Khandoba that if she got a son he would present a hundred thousand rupees to the deity. Gangabai did get a son who was later on famous as Sawai Madhav Rao. In keeping with his word Nana paid the huge sum in various forms. He presented silver images of Khandoba and Mhalsa that were worth twenty-five thousand rupees, the niche containing the Khandoba image was plated with silver sheet, gold masks were prepared for the lings, and the remaining sum was utilised for utensils in precious metal required for daily worship rites. Certain villages were also granted as 'inam' to the god during this period. After the downfall of the Maratha power very little has been done for this shrine, except small gifts and donations by common devotees.

The name Khandoba has been variously interpreted, the most commonly held belief being that it was a disorted form of Skanda, the son of Shiva. However, the deity is known by various names like Mallari, Malhari, Mailar, Martand, Mhalsakant, Ravalnath, Yelkoti Mahadev and it is widely popular in Maharashtra as well as Karnatak. It is more wellknown as Kahandoba among the Marathi-speaking people and as Mailar amongst the Kannad-speaking people. The word Khanda means a sword and if the word is derived according to that meaning, and if the custom of representing Khandoba in a ling form is taken into account, there would be little hesitation in accepting Prof. Khare's contention that Khandoba or Malhari is a form of Shiva. Now this Khandoba is supposed to be a warrior king and his kshatriya aspect is emphasised. As such he has also a 'minister' known as Hegadi,

the same personage whose image was seen while climbing the hill and another one of the variety opposite the shrine. Mhalsa is the wife of Khandoba. The story goes that Mhalsa was the daughter of a certain grocer Timmasheti of Nevasa. She was born on the full moon day of Magha and was married to the god on the full moon day of Pausha. Banai whose image also had been noted earlier is the other wife of Khandoba. However, certain traditions treat her not as a legal wife but a keep of Khandoba. She is supposed to belong to the Dhangar community. According to other legends more common in the Kanarese regions this Banai or Palai is a properly married wife of Khandoba, the marriage taking place at Naldrug on the full moon day of Shravan. Very often the horse and the dog appear as iconographical attributes of Khandoba. The slogan 'Yelkot' means the leader of a crore troops. The earliest known references to Khandoba and Mhalsa go back to the thirteenth century.

A record dated 1750 A.D. narrates a tale current at that time about how Khandoba appeared at Jejuri. Once several boys herding their cattle were resting on the Karhe-pathar. The god Khandoba suddenly appeared there and seated himself amongst the boys. But as soon as he noticed that Bhaya, one of his most devout bhakts was approaching, Khandoba disappeared. The other boys told Bhaya of the appearance and disappearance of the god. His disappointment knew no bounds. Below the blanket on which the boys were sitting a ling of Halad was found. Bhaya sat before it praying the god to reappear. The elders of the village put little credence in Bhaya's story and threw away the ling, but it turned into a precious stone, making the elders think again. And a great dispute arose as to whose devotion and piety made Khandoba go to the spot. Ultimately it was decided to draw twelve lines on the ground and to strike with pick-

axes on the lines. If anybody's axe struck a ling, he should get the credit of having brought the god. As was to be expected it was Bhaya whose axe struck against a ling from which gushed out streams of blood and milk. Nothing could stop the flow, finally the god appeared before a devotee and told him the blood would stop if a person from the Maral family of Pemar sprinkles his blood on the ling. This was done and the blood stopped rushing out. Soon a temple was erected over the ling. The particular record is connected with a dispute between this Bhaya and his successors on the one hand and some other villagers on the other, brought before the Peshwa's court.

Certain medieval texts like the *Jayadri-Mahatmya*, the *Martand-Vijay*, the *Malhari-Mahatmya* narrate how and why this incarnation of Malhari or Martand became necessary. Long long ago there were two daityas known as Madhu and Kaitabha. They had performed long tapas and had achieved immense power and strength and had troubled the entire Universe. Hence Vishnu slew them, but from their remnants two more daityas, Mani and Malla arose. These two again undertook penance to please Shiva and after hundreds of years of tapa Shiva appeared before them. They were anxious to revenge the defeat suffered in their previous lives and asked for boons the conditions of which appalled Shiva. They wanted to defeat all living things, human beings, gods, and demons and conquer all the Lokas. Nothing, neither the gods, the human beings, nor the Pancha-Mahabhutas (five elements of nature) nor any of the astras or shastras should kill them. 'It would be as you desire' said Shiva. But the god had by now become apprehensive of the power of the daityas and decided upon a course rather unusual for gods. He asked the demons to bestow a boon on him. The demons were greatly flattered and said 'Granted'; even without waiting to hear what his

demand was. Shiva asked that they should die at his hands. The demons agreed even to this but told him that they would face death only after they had conquered all the three Lokas, defeated the gods, thoroughly humiliated the brahmins, desecrated the temples and fully discredited the existing dharma. Shiva had no other recourse but to agree to these conditions.

Mani and Malla lost no time in putting into action their words. They gathered around them a huge army consisting of brave and ferocious demons who wielded various weapons and were extremely blood-thirsty. They despised everything and feared nothing. To begin with, the ashrams of rishis and tapasvins were laid waste. Cows were slaughtered. Fire and rapine became the order of the day. The bewildered population knew not to whom to turn for rescue and relief. At this juncture Narada appeared on the scene and advised them to seek refuge on the Dhavalagiri near the present Jejuri hills. They immediately proceeded to that spot and found refuge for their families. Then a delegation went to the Lord of the Heavens—Indra. Indra saw these people approaching and hastened to welcome and honour them. But when he learnt of the purpose of their visit he excused himself and advised them to proceed to vaikuntha and request Vishnu to come to their aid. He himself was absolutely powerless against the pair. Shiva's blessings were a veritable curse upon the gods and if at all anything could be done, it was through Vishnu. So the sages should approach Vishnu himself. They trekked the long path to Vishnu Loka. There again their reception by Vishnu was so warm and friendly that they began to feel reassured. Vishnu asked them to air their grievance and promised immediate relief. So the atrocities committed by Mani and Malla were narrated to him. Vishnu had, of course, heard of it long before but he had also heard something more, he knew

about the boon given by Shiva to the daityas and therefore asked the delegates to go and meet Shiva in the matter. Once again they were on the road, this time to see Shiva. The glamour of Shiva's abode far surpassed that of either of Indra Loka or that of Vaikuntha. Here also their welcome was equally warm. Shiva heard their complaint and decided that the time had come for putting an end to the rapacious careers of the two demons. He immediately assumed the Raudra or fierce form and ordered his armies out. The Raudra form was known as Martand Bhairav and the incident occurred on the full-moon day of the month of Chaitra.

The army of Martand Bhairav was such that the like of it had never been seen before. All the gods had sent their contingents. Skanda was the leader of the army. The first group was his own guards, mounted on peacocks and wearing blue armours. The next group that was spread as long as the eyes reached was the army of Indra, the Lord of the Heavens. The soldiers held flashing swords in their hands and rode huge war elephants. The elephants were swinging their trunks this way and that and were trumpeticng often being impatient to go to the attack. Next to them was arrayed a corps of warriors who were riding goats and were as fiery as their Lord—Agni. The army of Yama was immediately recognisable from their vahans, the giant he-buffalows, bellowing off and on. They held the Yama dandas in their hands and the tinkle of the bells that hung around their necks filled the air. Tha army of Nairut was of a fierce appearance and wielded menacing scimitars. Still further on was the corps consisting of red-headed troops swinging their pashas and flying the flag of Varuna. The army of Ganesh was quite strange looking, the horses had heads resembling that of mice and the soldiers carried amkushs and battle-axes. The legions of Moon rode horses having heads like deer.

The Sun's armies were ready to charge in huge chariot drawn by seven horses each. Brahmadeva had sent his armies astride milk-white swans, and carrying akshamalas and kamandalus. Huge garudas were ready to take off for battle. The warriors astride them flying Vishnu's flag wielded shankh, chakra, gada and padma. Finally was arrayed Shiva's own army wearing elephant hides and sporting shulas and khatvangas.

Martand Bhairav himself was astride a brilliant white charger. A giant scimitar hung from his belt. His minister was attending on him. When the army was drawn up, the commander presented it to the Lord who immediately ordered an advance against the demons. Great was the excitement and furore. The huge army soon arrived near Jayadri where a camp was erected.

Mani and Malla heard reports of the vast force advancing towards them, but were not in the least worried. Were they not unconquerable and invincible? And who was this Shiva? Had they not made Indra and Yama and Vishnu take to their heels before them? They could sure enough make short work of this crowd. Bugles were sounded and formations marched out in battle order. The leader of the demonic hordes was Mani. He was riding an elephant that looked like a moving mountain. He wore a shining armour and wielded a long scimitar. The battle cry of the daityas rose sky high! So confident of their strength were the demons and such was the fury of their charge that the army of the gods at first was taken aback. The initial losses suffered by them were enormous. But soon they recovered from the shock and then the real conflict began. There ensued a fierce clash. The battlefield was littered with hundreds of severed heads and limbs, corpses were numberless. Various commanders engaged themselves in face to face battles with their opposite number. Thus Khadga-damshtra, a demonic

general joined issue with Skanda. Ulkamukh faced Ganesh. When these prominent generals fell the wrath of Mani knew no bounds. He charged straightaway on Martand. He assumed various forms, that of a horse, of an elephant and so on and his fight with Martand was very stiff. The daitya was well versed in the trade of war and had the power of creating illusions (Maya). But all this was of no avail before the God who was determined to put an end to the nuisance. Ultimately he brought down the daitya and put his foot on his head with a view to cut off the neck. At this juncture the asur was suddenly repentant and prayed Shiva. He asked for a boon. He begged that he be associated with the Martand Bhairav form of Shiva. Bhairav then thought that he could spare Malla the fate that had befallen his brother Mani and sent Vishnu with a message. Shiva asked him to take away the remnants of his army to the Patala Loka and stay there and let the matters on the earth run as before. However, this advice had the effect of inflaming the demon who vowed to avenge the death of his brother. He told Vishnu that within no time he would find this Bhairav as dead as Mani, that he would not be satisfied as long as any of the gods was alive. Vishnu tried to dissuade the daitya from the suicidal course on which he was launching. But Malla was in no mood to listen and he marched forth towards the field.

Martand ordered Gritamari to attack him. Her attack was so ferocious that several of the assistants of the daitya, and hundreds of his war elephants were killed and he lost one of his arms. Then Martand himself charged. The duel was terrific both the contestants receiving numerous wounds. Ultimately the daitya was brought down and then he like his brother begged that his name and image be associated with that of the god, hence the name Malhari and the representations of the heads of

Mani and Malla on the pedestals of the Khandoba images. After the final victory the rishis and sages requested Malhari to stay on the Jayadri mountain, that is Jejuri. This he agreed to do in a ling form and is ever since seen and worshipped there.

The other equally popular shrine devoted to this god is at Pal in the Satara district. This place is a small village on the river Tarala, a small tributary of the Krishna river. This river divides the place in two parts, the one on the southern side is known as Pal and the one on the northern side as Rajapur. The shrine is located in the Rajapur area. Pal is approached from two places, Kashil and Atit, which are small villages on the Satara-Karad section of the Poona-Bangalore national highway. The route from Atit is no better than a foot track or at best a cart track and the distance is five miles. The one from Kashil which is nearer to Karad, is better and although there is no regular bus service between Kashil and Pal, during festival seasons the State Transport runs special buses between Kashil and Pal and between Karad and Pal. The place is now void of all its former glory, but in the eighteenth century various Maratha sardars had paid great attention to the shrine and its surroundings,

The temple consists of a square garbhagriha and a square mandap of the open variety. These are enclosed in a rectangular courtyard surrounded by pillared aisles. Both the garbhagriha and mandap are square on plan. The shrine has recesses and the offsets both vertical and horizontal. The mandap has a stone asana all round. The pillars are of the Yadav order and the ceilings are trebeate. The rectangular court-yard is surrounded by pillared aisles and arcades. There are several dipmalas and arched gateways around the temple. The verandah on the north of the temple has crude pillars of the Yadav order. The temple has three distinct shikhars. The

most prominent is the one on the main shrine, the second one covering the antarala and the third one is right in the course of the mandap. Immediately above the shrine a sgare stucco platform is led up some eight feet. This platform is decorated with arched recesses and on the corners are cypress pillars. Above this is a band of lotus bud design so common to all Maratha works. Upon this platform is the main shikhar a steplike structure with nine tiers. The plan is polygonal. A fluted stucco amalaka and kalash surmount the shikhar. Each tier of the shikhar is decorated with recessed arched niches. on the four corners are four small stucco minarets. Many of the niches contain figures of gods and goddesses and other personalities who wear the characteristic pagdi, the long flowing angarkha, dhoti and surwar and the prominent moustache of a Maratha warrior.

The pillared verandahs that surround the temple were constructed by the famous Maratha general Dhanaji Jadhav. The arched cloisters and the magnificent gateways along with bastioned wall that surrounds the temple are attributed to the Shindes of Gwalior. It is also more than likely that the shikhars were also constructed by them and that the shrine itself was largely restored by them.

The garbhagriha contains the object of worship as the kshetra, which like that of Jejuri is a pair of swayambhu lings representing the god Khandoba and his wife Mhalsa. So also there are the images of the two in the temple, that do not differ iconographically from those at Jejuri.

The daily rites consist of the usual three worships and the two aratis; in addition the Ekadashini is performed daily. Of the special occasions, Vijayadashami, the birth-day celebrations of the god on the sixth day of the month of Margashirsha and the marriage ceremony of the god and the goddess on the fourteenth day of the

month of Pausha are the most important. Like the other kshetras on the evening of the Vijayadashami day the god and goddess are placed in a palanquin and are taken out for the crossing of the borders ceremony. Bands of musicians are in attendance, large number of torches and a great amount of Haladi powder give the scene a bizzare aspect. The birth day celebrations take place mainly in the temple. On that day the Laghurudra takes place and the god is offered a naivedya of sweets prepared from gram-flour. No non-vegetarian naivedya is offered and if any of the devotees is keen on presenting one to the god he has to place it outside the temple walls. But the biggest festival is that of the marriage of the god. Mhalsa is the daughter of one Timmasheti from Nevasa. The god one day appeared in the dream of the Sheti and asked for the hand of his daughter in marriage. The Sheti was over-joyed by the offer and the marriage duly took place at Pal with great pomp and festivity. The story of Timmasheti and his daughter has no doubt something to do with the existence of the great Mahalaya alias Mhalsa at Nevasa. But it is not possible here nor is this the place to go into the details about this transformation. The annual festival begins with a procession of the god to the house of the bride which is temporarily located in the Pal part while the temple is, as already stated in the Rajapur part. The Patil of the village takes the Khandoba image on an elephant to the bride's house. Huge crowds accompany the procession which takes four hours to cross the distance of a sixteenth of a mile. Quantities of haladi and dry coconut are thrown in the air. The cheers of 'Yelkot', 'Yelkot', 'Malharicha Yelkot' fill the air. The vast majority of the crowds is made up of persons belonging to the Ramoshi and the Mang communities. The latter are at no other time allowed so near the god and no Mang worth the name would miss the annual opportunity of having

the darshan of his god. When the palanquin of the god comes out of the shrine, the Mangs flank it on either side, their faces and clothes yellow with haladi and carrying big sticks. Nowhere else would one find the members of the lowest castes of Hindu society participating so enthusiastically in any religious festival as at Pal.

The customs of taking of vows and their fulfilment are quite similar to those at Jejuri although the number of Muralis at this place is quite insignificant. In general, this kshetra is only secondary in importance and but for the marriage ceremony of the god is neglected by the devotees for all intents and purposes.

The legendary accounts about the presence of the god here are conspicuous by their absence as the *Malhari Mahatmya* is silent on that point. Various records from the Maratha period mention donations and grants to the temple and speak of its popularity. Its geographical position, that is, its not being on any of the main highways of the region might have contributed to its relegation as a secondary centre of Khandoba worship.

ध्यायेन्मल्लारिदेवं कनकगिरीनिभं म्हालसाभूषितांकम् ।
श्वेताश्वं खड्गहस्तं विबुध बुधगणैः सेयमानं कृताथैः ।
युक्तांघ्रिं दैत्यमूर्ध्नि डमरुविलसितं नैशचूर्णाभिरायम् ।
नित्यं भक्तेषु तुष्टं श्वगणपरिवृतं नित्यमोंकारगम्यम् ।

This is a Sanskrit verse which exhorts the people to pray Malhari Martand. This Malhari Martand is described in the verse as follows: Mhalsa is seated near him, his vahan is a white horse, he holds a sword in his hand, his other hand holds a damaru, around him are some dogs; his body is smeared with yellow (haladi), his feet rest on the heads of the daityas (Mani and Malla), and he is prayed and worshipped by all good people.

पंचानन हयवाहन सुरभूषित लीळा
खंडामंडित दंडितदानव अवलीळा
मणिमल्ल मर्दुनिया जो धूसर पिवळा
करि कंकण, बाशिंगे, सुमनांच्या माळा ।।
जय देव जय देव जय जय मल्हारी ।
वारी दुर्जन वारी निंदक अपहारी ।
सुरवर सैंवर वर दे मज नाना देवा
नाना नामे गाईन घडो तुझी सेवा
अगणित गुण गावया वाटतसे हेवा
फणिवर शिणला तेथे नरपामर केवा ।। जय देव०
रघुवर नामस्मरणे शंकर हृदयीं नीवाला
तो हा मदनांतक अवतार झाला
यालागी आवडी भावे वर्णिला
रामी रामदासा जिवलग भेटला ।। जय देव०

The above arati states that Khandoba or Malhari who has the attributes like the sword and horse etc. is an incarnation of Shiva and the poet prays him to favour him. The arati is by Ramadas.

PANDHARPUR

VITTHAL

THE Vitthal of Pandharpur is undoubtedly the premier deity of Maharashtra. It is, perhaps, the greatest centre of attraction for the masses as far as the spiritual field goes. The enormity of the influence Vitthal and the Varkari-Sampradaya have exercised over the life of the Marathi people becomes obvious even from cursory glimpses of some of the very broad aspects of our cultural life. The huge crowds that accompany the palanquins of the various saints to Pandharpur provide a visible symbol of this popularity. A great mass of Marathi literature of the pre-British period is devoted to the praise and prayer of Vithoba and the propagation of the Varkari cult. Perhaps more important and significant is the fact that some of the most enlightened minds of Maharashtra have merged themselves completely in the devotion—Bhakti—of Vitthal. Lastly, the sect has attracted for the last thousand years people belonging to various castes and communities, from various professions and callings, from the learned and from the uninitiated. In fact it is one of the few forces that have held the Hindu society of this region together, especially during the strains and stresses of Islamic rule. Vithoba and the Bhakti-cult are thus a unique phenomenon as far as Maharashtra goes.

This deity which is a typical symbol of Marathi religious life comes from the Kanarese regions. This is not to say that Vaishnavite worship was unknown to Maharashtra before the advent of the Vitthal of Pandharpur. Several images dating back to a period earlier than the deity at Pandharpur exist in Maharashtra. However, the most popular of them comes from the land mentioned above. This belief that Vitthal had something to do with the Kanarese regions is held all along the years and one

finds a reference to this from very early times. For example, Namdev, one of the greatest saints and devotees of Vithoba and a contemporary of Jnyaneshvar, in one of his verses clearly calls Vitthal a 'Kanada', one belonging to the Kanarese region. The relevant verses run as follows :

कानडा विठ्ठल वो । ऊभा भिवरेतीरी ।

(The 'kanada' Vitthal is standing on the banks of the Bhivara i.e. Bhima.)

नाम बरवे रूप बरवे । दर्शन बरवे कानडिया ।

(The 'darshan' of the Kanada is good, his name is good, his looks are pleasing.)

These passages make it amply clear that the origin of the god was not till that time forgotten. Turning to other historical records one finds an inscription of the Hoyasala King Someshvar that records the grant of the village of Hiriya Garanj in the present Mysore state. This inscription is dated 1236 A.D. and clearly indicates the keen interest evinced by the Hoyasala monarch in the deity and its well-being. This was not very surprising as there is ground to believe, according to some scholars, that it was a great Hoyasala prince who was himself responsible for the establishment of the Vithoba at Pandharpur. King Vishnuvardhan alias Bittidev (1117-1137 A.D.) of the Hoyasala dynasty was so much influenced by the teachings of Ramanuja that he accepted the Vaishnava sect discarding his original Jaina faith. His brother Vir-Ballal launched several expeditions in the northerly direction and carried the northern limits of the Hoyasala empire to the shores of the Bhima. It is not unlikely that this Vishnuvardhan met Pundarik or Pundalik at Pandharpur and there erected a temple of Vishnu on his request. It was a traditional custom to name the temple after the builder and in accordance with this tradition Vishnuvardhan named the deity Vitthal, a derivative of Bittidev the alias of Vishnuvardhan. This is of course the historical side of the picture, but mythology

has a different version regarding Vitthal's presence on the Bhima. The *Padmapurana* contains a section of '*Panduranga-Mahatmya*' pertaining to Pandharpur and its deity Vitthal. The *Panduranga-Mahatmya* narrates the mythological legend regarding how and why Vitthal came to the kshetra. One evening Vishnu was moving about in the gardens of his mansion when he noticed a lady approaching. When she came nearer he recognised her as none else than Shachi, the wife of Indra, the Lord of the Heavens. He wondered what business that fair lady had. Her coming all alone, without her usual regal paraphernalia was strange. While he was thus trying to make things out, Shachi was standing near him. The expression in her eyes startled Vishnu, but he collected himself and welcomed her. The fair lady was impatient of all small talk, brushed aside all formalities and without much ado came out with her real intention. She had found that the charms of the Lord of Vaikunth were irresistible. A good and loyal wife as she was, she had tried to check the rebellious thoughts. But the temptation had proved too much for her and there she was! This was an extremely embarrassing situation. Vishnu could not, even out of considerations of policy, hope to elope with Indra's wife and get away with it. He rejected her advances but told her that her desire would be fulfilled in the next birth, Vishnu would become Krishna and Shachi would become Radha. Thus would her lust be satisfied. Shachi accordingly became Radha, and Vishnu as Krishna entertained her. The scene now shifts to Dwaraka. Their meetings were frequent although surreptitious. The game was not quite safe and soon the worst befell the two lovers. Rukmini once saw the two of them together. She had of course heard of Radha and the days of childhood that Krishna had spent with her in Mathura, but she had no idea that Krishna was still attached to her and so she was extremely furious and greatly disappointed. Instead

of making a fuss over the incident she decided to punish him in a silent but more effective manner. Without notifying anybody she left Dwarka and travelled to Dindirvana. Here she undertook a severe penance with the object of winning Krishna back to her. But it was not at all necessary. Her absence was noted soon enough and the repentant husband at once instituted a search for the deserter. He went to various places but found no trace of her. When his search in the northen regions proved fruitless, he turned towards the south. Soon he came upon Dindirvana and found his wife seated in an isolated spot in the thick of the jungles. Her eyes were closed in meditation and she never noticed anybody approaching her. Krishna went near her and tried to woo her favour back. She did not recognise him and when he waxed more eloquent administered him a sharp rebuff. The god thereupon decided to launch a counter-tapa and stood before her with his arms resting on the hips, eyes looking straight in front. He is standing there for twenty-eight 'yugas' or ages. And the two of them would have stood there for longer also but for the intervention, albeit unintentional, of one Pundalik.

This Pundalik or Pundarik was in early years a self centred man given to the pursuit of pleasure. He neglected his duties towards his parents, both of whom were old and ailing and bestowed all his attention on his attractive wife. Pundalsk and his wife feasted on delicious food while the father and mother nearly starved. Once they asked Pundalik to take them to Kashi for a pilgrimage but the son instead of helping them sent them off with insulting abuse. The two proceeded on foot to Kashi. For them life with Pundalik was worse than the privations they would suffer on the long journey. Some time later Pundalik decided to go to the yatra himself. He hired two excellent horses for himself and his wife. They embarked on the

long journey and quickly traversed the distance his parents were struggling on foot. His enthusiasm and hurry, however, were such that he missed the route and as dusk was nearing decided to take refuge in a nearby building that looked like an ashram. He went there to enquire and found out that it was an ashram and belonged to a famous rishi by name Kukkut. Kukkut hospitably welcomed the couple and invited them to stay with him as long as they chose. Pundalik asked him directions for reaching Varanashi. The sage told him he did not know the way nor had he ever been there. The guest was quick to ridicule the kind host for not having gone to Kashi which was so close by. But the latter held his peace. The matter rested there and everybody went to sleep. Pundalik however, was disturbed from his sleep around midnight and thought he heard some female voices. He came out to investigate and saw three ladies sprinkling water in the courtyard of the ashram. The looked ghastly and pale. But he noticed that a change was overcoming them and when they had finally finished cleaning the courtyard they were looking like some divine beings, fresh and beautiful. This phenomenon confounded the young Pundalik but he had enough wits left to rush forth and enquire. They revealed that the three of them were Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati and used to come to Kukkut's ashram every morning to repurify themselves. And although Pundalik was a sinful soul, he now stood absolved of his sins because of his having met them. The curiosity of Pundalik grew and he asked them about the secret of Kukkut's power. 'He had served and nursed his parents most faithfully and devoted all his life to that one aim. He had thus accumulated vast Punya.' Pundalik saw the light and hastened back to his parents. He put them on horseback, took them to Kashi showed them round the tirth and brought them back most respectably. Henceforth, the care of his old

mother and father came before everything else—even before god, as events were to prove.

The god was greatly pleased to see the great change that had come about in Pundalik and decided to meet him. Once while Pundalik was massaging his father's feet, the great Shri Krishna appeared in the door of the ashram. His arms were resting on the hips as when he was standing in front of Rukmini. His presence went unoticed at first as Pundalik was thoroughly engrossed in his task. However, he could not long ignore the bright rays of light that emanated from the god's body. He turned back to see what was happening and found to his great delight that at last god had come to meet him. But the god had to wait till Pundalik's duty was over and hence Pundalik threw a brick that was lying nearby as an 'asana' to the divine guest. The brick still forms the asana of the god. When his father was asleep Pundalik got up to welcome the god who offered any boons the man might care to ask for. Pundalik asked for nothing more and nothing less than the eternal presence of the god at the spot where he was standing. And thus there he is, the Vitthal or Vishnu or Krishna, still standing on the brick Pundalik had offered him!

A curious aspect of the Vitthal of Pandharpur is that his presence in this temple was never continuous. Probably the first removal of the Vitthal from his shrine was actutated by deep devotion to the deity while the latter ones were caused through greed, fear and Islamic iconoclastic zeal. The whole story of this removal is not very well supported by any definite historical evidence, but the roots of the tale are buried so deep in the tradition of the land that truth must be lurking just around the corner. It is commonly believed that some king, most probably Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagar (1510-1526 A.D.) had taken the image of Pandharpur and established it in a temple specially erected to receive it. This Krishnadava had previously

brought the image from Udayagiri on his way back from a victorious campaign. And it is more than likely that the king wanted to protect the image from the neighbouring Moslem princes and hence removed it to his capital—the safest spot then available. The whole pivot of the story is one Bhanudas. Bhanudas is supposed to be the great-grand father of Eknath, the famous Marathi saint. It so happened that the Varkaris once found that the garbha-griha did not contain the Vitthal image. They wondered about what had happened to the god. Bhanudas also arrived on the scene for his usual darshan and was informed by some knowledgeable people that Vithoba had been 'kidnapped' by Krishnadeva Raya. The man who was fairly old proceeded towards Vijayanagar forthwith, singing bhajans in prayer of his beloved god. His journey was slow and visibly painful and it took him more than a fortnight to reach Vijayanagar. Here he arrived by around midnight and went straight to the shrine, where Vitthal was 'detained'. The temple was a huge structure and the king had provided the deity with all sorts of precious ornaments and utensils and as such pickets were posted to guard the shrine. However, as Bhanudas approached the guards were overcome by sleep and the locks of the gates opened automatically. Bhanudas found no difficulty in visiting the god. He rushed forward and embraced the feet of the image and started pleading with the god to go back to Pandharpur. Numerous Varkaris were waiting there to receive him and none of them would take water or food till they had his darshan. Vitthal was moved by this great devotion but he was caught on the horns of a dilemma. Just as Bhanudan and the Varkaris were his devotees Krishnadeva was also an equally pious and faithful devotee. So how could he hurt Krishnadeva? He decided to use a stratagem. He consoled Bhanudas with soothing words and asked him to wait for some time and as a prasada took off the Tulshi

garland from his own shoulders and put it around Bhanudas's neck. The old man was greatly pleased, came out of the temple and rested nearby. He did not however, noticed that Vithoba had placed on his shoulders a diamond necklace along with the Tulshi mala. Next day morning the priests discovered the loss and the alert went out. The guards however, had not to go far in search of the thief. An old man, an obvious stranger, was lying just around the corner with the necklace on. He was promptly arrested and produced before the king, who decided that capital punishment was the thing the thief deserved. A day was fixed and a 'shula' or spike was erected. Bhanudas was naturally confused but was sure of himself and had the fullest confidence in his innocence and in his god. So he continued to sing bhajans and pray the god. Not once did he say anything to the king or his guards. When he was led to the shula a miracle occured. That pole started blooming into branches, leaves and flowers. The executioners ran to the king in bewilderment. The latter was full of incredulity but ultimately consented to come down to the spot. He immdiately realised the meaning of the happening and laid prostrate before Bhanudas. He enquired of Bhanudas about the purpose of his visit, and on learning from him the havoc his action had caused at Pandharpur decided to return the image to its original home. A decorated palanquin was immediately made ready, the image was most respectfully placed in it and a huge procession of devotees brought it back to Pandharpur. The image arrived on an Ekadashi, that is, the eleventh day of one of the two fortnights of a month. This 'return of the native' is celebrated on every ekadashi by a chariot procession even today. Passages from Bhanudas's own works, and the literature of saints like Vadirajatirth, Shrida-Vitthal etc. to some extent support the story.

The image of Vitthal was during the medieval period

removed several times to protect it from the Moslem invaders. It was either kept with some of the Badavas (priests) or was removed to a sanctuary at a place named Degaon. It is a small village not for from Pandharpur and references abound that indicate that the image was hidden there for fairly long stretches. The image was finally brought out of its hiding when the Maratha regime had achieved considerable stability.

A very curious thing about the removal of the image is that it was stolen or held in ransom by private individuals often. One of the recorded incidents is as follows. In the months of Aprll-May 1657 one Raghoji carried away the image and returned it after receiving a large consideration. Some five months later he conspired with a Badava and again stole the image and extracted a huge sum for its restitution.

One thing is to be remembered, however. And that is, the great influence and prestige of the deity was not affected even in the slightest degree by these forced journeys and absences.

Inscriptional and paper references to the Vitthal and Pandharpur during the last thousand years are mostly records of grants made by various rulers and commoners to the shrine. The earliest known reference to Pandharpur comes from the sixth century A. D. This is a copper-plate grant of the Rashtrakutas and although it mentions Pandarangapalli, that is, Pandharpur, it does not make any mention of Vitthal at all. The first definite reference to the deity is dated 1236 A. D. and speaks of the grant from the Hoyasala king mentioned earlier. A very interesting epigraph of a slightly later date (1237 A.D.) is the famous "Chauryaaishicha Lekha". This inscription records various donations given to the Vithoba by people from various places. It is a list, divided in seven columns, of the donors, not unlike the present day lists published by newspapers

of donors and contributors to various funds. The inscription is carved on a huge block of stone (5′ by 3′). Sometime during the last century or a century before that, some shrewd fellow established the image of a goddess on the top of this stone and revealed to everybody that if one wants to escape from the cycle of eighty-four births, he should worship the goddess and rub his back against the plain surface of the stone, that is, against the inscriptions. This 'revelation' caught the imagination of the masses and for the last hundred years at least hundreds of thousands of persons have rubbed themselves against the stone till some ten years back the practice was prohibited and a protective iron grill mounted on it. However, by that time the inscription was greatly damaged. The story is mentioned here merely to indicate how unscrupulous money-seekers many a time exploit eager punya-seekers.

Kanarese literature of the sixteenth century contains various reference to Vitthal and Pandhapur. The later records belong mainly to the Maratha period. These relate to donations, grants, and the management and administration of the temple. The Bhosale rulers and the Peshwas and various Maratha generals and sardars visited the shrine often. The first known royal annual grant to the temple from the Maratha period was made by Chhatrapati Rajarama, the grandson of Shivaji. He assigned one hundred and eighty hons for the worship and other rites of the god. After Shahu's accession the original 'sanad' was brought to him for renewal and he renewed the grant in January 1707. Apart from these grants, the second set of papers deals with the disputes between the various types of priests or sevakaris of the temple. The Badave, Dange, Dingare etc. constantly quarrelled with each other regarding their respective duties and the shares in the temple revenues. The latest

of the series of judgments delivered by the Satara Chhatrapatis, that settled these matters, is dated 1838. The king had made a careful examination of all the previous records and on the basis of that made the settlement which touched practically all the points of dispute. Then there are orders to local political agents to construct a ghat or a mansion, to make proper arrangements for the sanitation and peace and tranquillity of the kshetra or to close down a liquor-bar that was flourishing at the place.

Pandharpur is a large town on the banks of Bhima or Chandrabhaga as it is locally known. This is referred to in old texts by various names such as Pandhari, Pandurangapur, Pandarangapalli, Pandarange, Phaganipur, Pundarik Kshetra. It is impossible to trace the original forms from which these derivatives have been evolved, except in the case of Pandaranga palli and Pundarik Kshetra, one indicating the presence of Pandurang and the other indicating that of Pundarik or Pundalik, the great devotee who caused the god to stand where he today is. Today it is known as Pandharpur or simply Pandhari. Railway routes connect the place with important junctions like Kurduwadi and Miraj on the Central and Southern railways. State buses link the place with all nearby district places like Sholapur, Poona, Satara, Sangli etc. All roads are in good condition making the bus ride easier and comfortable. Visitors to the place were and are accommodated by the Badavas who act as kshetropadhyayas. In addition lately huge rest-houses or dharmsshalas are erected by great devotees of Vitthal like Sant Gadage Maharaj. Hotels and guest-houses also entertain visitors and lodging at Pandharpur is not a very difficult proposition, of course in off seasons. When the two great yatras are taking place it is with great difficulty that accommodation of a decent sort could be found. Moreover, in spite of the best precautions that the

authorities take the sanitation of the place is not always satisfactory and as such a casual visitor, one who is not a varkari would be well advised to go to the place when no fair is in progress. The whole town of Pandharpur is clustered with temples big and small, and the parts of the town that house the principal shrines still do maintain much of their medieval aspect. The streets are extremely narrow, not more than nine to ten feet in width, although paved with stone. These lanes are flanked on either side by towering houses, many of them three storeyed mansions built on the typical Maratha style. They present a dead surface to the street for the first fifteen feet or so that are built in stone. The upper parts are in brick, have windows and a balcany or two These stand close together and practically hang over the streets making them dark and gloomy. The parts of the town developed in recent years display all aspects of modernity—broad streets and well-spaced houses. But the older part dominates the picture. Custom demands that the darshan of the deity is to be preceded by a visit to Pundalik and by a dip in the Chandrabhaga.

The river has a fairly broad bed here. On either side are vast stretches of sandy banks that are overrun in the floods. On the banks and inside the water are several temple structures. The vast gravelly-stretches are used for camping by the varkaris who flock here in their thousands. To make the approach to the waters easier several ghats or flights of steps have been constructed by charitable Persons. Most of these were built during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and many are of substantial size, two stretching for more than a hundred feet along the river. However, they do not form a continuous stretch as at some other kshetras, being interspersed with buildings and temples. Building of ghats was a public utility that had assumed the status of a 'punya-

karma', and was practised all over Maharashtra during the Peshwa period. Pandharpur received its share of such attention and although some of the ghats are not in use now, their utility to the people was immense in the bygone days.

In the bed of the Bhima and a furlong from the Vitthal shrine is the temple or Samadhi of Pundalik, the man who brought the God to Pandharpur. It is a square room (internally), with an open-arched portico in its front. This portico is larger than the garbhagriha measuring (25′ by 17′). The shrine is surmounted by a brick and mortar spire that is pyramidal in shape, rising in five storeys. The main object or worship at this place is a Shiva ling. The ling is covered with a closefitting brass cover and on it is set a hollow bust of the god. The bust of the god wears ear ornaments and a mukut that is surrounded by the coils of a five hooded cobra. On either side of the brass figure are three feet high brass images of Jaya and Vijaya, the dwarpalas of the shrine. At four in the morning the daily routine rites start with the Kakadarati. The daily worship is by a Koli minist-rant in the early morning. It includes the usual baths in the five nectars or panchamrits, milk curds, ghee, honey and sugar, the rubbing with oil and other fragrant subs-tances and the offering of Bel-leaves, flowers and naivedya. The worship is offered to the ling and the brass image is taken out at this time. After the worship the image is replaced over the ling and wrapped in silk-bordered dhoti and kurata. In the evening the arati is sung. During the Mahashivaratri days a big festival is held here. When one goes to have the darshan of the image he finds him-self surrounded by people most anxious to secure the maximum possible punya for the visitor. This is done through a convenient method, no tapa or meditation is required, he just pays as much as the priest asks for and

he is assured of the greatest possible punya. This method of accumulating punya, though profitable to priests would soon ruin the visitor if he is not careful enough to give whatever he wants and not whatever the priests want. This is so because there are so many sacred spots here that a person who is off his guard is likely to accumulate vast stock-piles of punya that would last him during not only this but many more births.

Leaving the Bhima and the Pundalik temple behind one comes up the Mahadwara ghats to enter into the town. The street that leads from the ghats to the eastern gate of the Vitthal temple is flanked on either side by shops offering for sale various substances like flowers, bukka, kumkum, sweets etc. used for offering to the deity. There are also some general stores and gold-smith shops on the street. The shopkeepers often are quite solicitous about the visitors' requirements and many of them act as agents of the temple priests giving advice, even unwanted, on how to conduct the 'right' kind of vidhis at the temple and kshetra. Then comes the enclosure within which stands the great god. The whole stands on a high plinth and is surrounded by towering walls pierced by eight gates. The area occupied is considerable being 350 feet east-west and 170 feet north-south. Of the eight gates there are three each in the northern and eastern walls and one each in the southern and western walls. The chief entrance to the courtyard is through the eastern gate. This gate is known as the Namdev gate, after Namdev the famous saints. This thirteenth century poet-philosopher belonged to the Shimpi community and was a friend of Jynaneshvar. The gate is reached by a flight of twelve steps. The entire first or lowest step and the frontface of the step above it or plated with brass and on the brass platedface of the second step are carved fourteen small standing figures supposedly members of Namdev's family. The first figure is that of Namdev, holding a tambourine in his hand

and performing a kirtan. According to local tradition the rest of the fourteen persons represented on the plate drowned themselves in the river when Namdev took samadhi. Close to the first step is placed a brass bust of Namdev. A priest of the Shimpi community has charge of the bust, the offerings go to the Badavas or hereditary priests of the Vithoba. The step on which this mask is placed is called the Namdev-step and no one touches it with his feet. It is to be crossed without touching it. The spot is worshipped as the samadhi of Namdev. It is stated that Namdev requested the god to permit him to remain there as he would then receive on his head the dust from the feet of Vithoba's devotees.

In front of this step, in the corner of the house opposite the Namdev gate is a small niche that houses a stone two feet high and one and half-feet broad. This stone is worshipped as the samadhi of Chokha Mela, a Mahar devotee of Vithoba. The Mahars used to worship this samadhi and pay their respects to the Vithoba from this spot when they were not allowed entry into the temple.

The Namdev gate opens on a narrow passage with a roof resting on arches with three rooms on each side, the central room on each side having an inner room. There is an image of Ganesh on the left hand side. The whole supports a nagarkhana. This passage and rooms form together the Mukha or Mukti mandap. On descending half a dozen steps one enters a spacious quadrangle nearly 120' by 60'. On the northern and southern sides of this are arched aisles used for cooking etc. on festival occasions. There are three dipmalas in the quadrangle and the samathis of Pralhadbuva Badave and Kanhaya Haridas. So also in the same quadrangle are the images of Garuda and Hanuman, the latter established by Swami Ramadas. Six steps lead from this partly covered quadrangle to a narrow mandap (50' by 10'). The mandap is of stone con-

struction. In the back wall of the mandap are three gates of which the middle gateway and doors have been elaborately plated with brass and highly decorated. On either side are the dwarapalas—Jaya and Vijaya. This hall was built by two Naik brothers from Ped in 1621. To the left of the gateway in the back wall of the mandap is a large niche with the image of Ganesh daubed with redlead. To the right of the gateway is a black stone image of Saraswati with a lotus, akshamala, parshu and a book as her ayudhas.

From the central door one enters the 'Solakhamba' mandap, a hall with sixteen pillars. The hall is approximately 41′ by 46′. It has four rows of four pillars and four pilasters in each wall. It is constructed on the Yadav order. The ceilings of each square cell thus formed are on the trebeate style and scenes from the Dashavataras and Krishna-lila decorate them. Around this 'Solakhamba mandap' are grouped a number of cells that house various deities like Kashivishvanath, Rama-Lakshman, Kalbhairav Dattatreya etc. Of the sixteen pillars in the hall the base and capital of the second in the second row are plated with gold and its shaft with silver. This shaft bears a small image of Vishnu and it is said to be standing in the place of an old Garuda-stambha that stood here before the Vitthal before the mandap was erected. Pilgrims embrace the pillar and make money offerings to it. In the backwall of this mandap are several doors the central one of which leads to the Chaukhamba, a mandap with four pillars and measuring 22′ by 20′. In the southern wall of his Chaukhamba is the Elephant gate that is used by the priests to get entry into the garbhagriha when the main entrance is crowded. A deep niche in the northern wall serves as the bed-chamber of the deity, known as the Shejghar. This shejghar is furnished with a silver couch with bed clothes and some of the raiments. Except at the time of the shejarati the door of this chamber is closed. The next member

of the architectural scheme is the antechamber. It is also known as the Kaman or arch because of a pointed arch that forms its frontage. From this antechamber one enters the garbhagriha.

Here stands the holy of holies, the famous Vitthal. It is placed on a stone pedestal about four feet in height and is itself three and a half feet in height. Carved of black stone it is not a very finely polished or finished sculpture. The description of the image that comes from the Badaves is as follows. The image has a Shiva-ling on its head, the Kaustubha mala around the neck, and the 'vatslanchhan' on the chest. Of this the Shiva-ling is nothing more than a headgear or crown of a rather uncommon shape, more like a topee than like a crown. There are rather large makar-kundalas in the ears. The image has two arms the left hand holds the shankh and the right hand holds a lotus stem. Both rest on the hips. The waistcloth is merely indicated. The Vitthal image stands on a squarish block, known as the brick that Pundalik had offered him as an asana. One cannot enjoy the pleasure of the darshan of Vitthal for more than a few seconds as the rush is always great and the queue system is strictly enforced. But even those fleeting moments do not fail to create a lasting impression.

The exterior of the garbhagriha has much merit from the architectural point of view. Its walls are formed by several pilasterlike projoctions vertically and emphatic roll and kani mouldings horizontally. The plinth spreads a good deal outside from the base of the walls. The cornice is of an elegant curvilinear outline and the first tier of the pyramidal spire is formed by numerous elephants whose anatomy has been wrought out with considerable skill. Then follow four tiers consisting of the conventional Maratha motifs of niches and minarets. Various stucco figures are placed in the niches. In the three niches in the walls facing the cardinal directions are the images of Narasimha,

Radhakrishna and Sheshashayi Vishnu. The structure probably belongs to the sixteen century while the superstructure was erected in 1830 by the chief of Bhor State.

Behind the Vitthal temple is the temple of Rakhumai, Rukmini, the wife of the god. This falls in the north-western corner of the enclosure. The reason why Rakhumai is not with the god is, as explained earlier in the legendary account, that she is performing penance. Rakhumai's temple has now a shrine, an antarala, a mandap and a sabhamandap. Formerely there were only the shrine and a small portico, their construction assigned to a period later than that of the Vitthal temple. The mandap and the sabhamandap were caused to be built by one Chandulal who was said to be a minister of the Nizam. The sabhamandap is about forty feet square and forty feet high and has a dipmala to the north. Four steps covered by a porch lead up from the outer hall to the main hall which rests on six pillars and eight pilasters. In the antechamber adjoining this mandap is the bedchamber of the goddess. The main shrine is about eleven feet square. Near the back wall, on a pedestal about four feet in height is the image of Rakhumai with a silver-plated 'prabhavala' behind her. The image is about three feet in height and in the Karnataka style. It is generally dressed like a Marathi lady. The devi has numerous ornaments on the same style. Nearby are shrines to Satyabhama and Radha or Rahi. Like all other shrines the temple enclosure is clustered with numerous images of all ages and sects.

The ordinary or routine worship and service of the god takes place five times a day. The routine begins with the Kakad arati early morning. The god is awakened, his feet are washed, sandal-paste is applied and incense, camphor etc. are burnt while the arati is being sung. The next session is the panchamrit-puja when the clothes and orna-

ments of the previous day are removed, the image is bathed in the five 'amrits' then bathed with clean water, draped in new clothes and other rituals included in the 'shoda-shopacharas' are performed. The afternoon worship mainly consists of the offering of the naivedya. About three in the afternoon and a little earlier on holidays, comes the dressing or 'poshakha'. The priests remove the old sandal-paste marks, wash the face, and apply fresh sandal-paste. The old clothes are taken away and new ones are placed on the images. Scented oil is applied to the face and neivedya is offered. On holidays and festival occasions costly ornaments are put on, and the dress, the pagdi or the headgear, the dhoti and uttariya are all of thin plate of gold. After the god is dressed it is open for darshan to all. The next puja is the dhupa-arati, an arati sung with incense burning. The last daily rite is the shej-arati, which takes place at ten o'clock or even at twelve on holidays. Almost all the officiating staff of the priests is present for the arati. The image is never removed and as such is never literally placed on a bed, although the necessary furnishings are there. Instead a very interesting procedure is followed. A member of the Dingre folks, a class of hereditary servants of the god, sprinkles water on the floor between the pedestal and the bedchamber and sweeps it. Then the Badava or priest proper comes and opens the chamber-door, arranges the bed clothes, lights a lamp and sets near the bed a cup of sweetened milk, some sweets and a spittoon. The Dingre then spreads a red carpet from the pedestal to the bed-chamber. This cloth is covered with the foot-prints of a cow and that of Lord Krishna. The Dingre, the chopdars etc. then stand in the ante-chamber, the god's feet are washed and hymns recited. Then fresh clothes are put on the image with garlands around the neck and a nosegay in the hands. Hymns and aratis are sung and lights and incense are burned. The

Badavas circumambulate round the god and leave the chamber to lock it. The symbolism af the foot-prints is most artistically utilised to indicate that the god had walked down to the bed-chamber. And thus ends the day for the god.

Apart from these routine or daily worships there are several festivals connected with the temple, so also certain periodic rituals. Every Wednesday and Saturday the god is bathed with sented oil after the early morning disrobing and before the panchamrit snana. These special baths are, however, not performed if the day is a no-moon day, a dwadashi or a vyatipat—an ominous conjunction. The ekadashi or eleventh day of every fortnight is a special occasion. On these days the Varkaris and devotees of the god observe fast. The god is presented as his naivedya substances that are permitted for consumption on the day. On the ekadashis the god is not put to sleep-he and the Badavas keep awake throughout the night. There are certain other peculiar customs, for examples, from the fifth of Magh to the fifth of Phalgun i.e. the Rangapanchami day, red powder (gual) is sprinkled on the god's feet; and a special variety of turban is put on the head. Gokul ashtami or the birth-day of Shri Krishna is observed with great pomp and ceremony. Kirtans and pravachanas take place. During the two large fairs held in Pandharpur, in Ashadh and Kartik the number of devotees gathering for the darshan is so large that the routine daily services are suspended and only the morning worship takes place. The bed-chambers remain closed and the god and the goddess are present in their respective shrines to meet the devotees at all times. Approximately ten days after the yatra is over there takes place a prakshala-puja, a wash-worship. On this occasion the most elaborate anointing and sugar-rubbing take place so as to soothe the god who is supposed to be fatigued

after his constant presence in the shrine. People from the town bring sweetened water to bathe the god and a number of washes take place. However, the important aspect of the yatras is not the temple rituals but the vast masses that gather here to meet the god on the ekadashis of Ashadh and Kartik. A glimpse of the gathering and traditional practices regarding it is given later on.

All this temple service is most elaborately organised at Pandharpur. Very few other shrines of Maharashtra display such a developed organisation. There are several cadres of the temple servants whose rights and duties have been fixed by custom and regulation for a long time now. At the apex of the order are the Badavas, who are the custodians and superintendents of the temple-property and worship. The jewels of the deity and other belongings of the deity are in their custody and it is for them to see that all the things required for the daily rituals are provided for. All the offerings to the god, whether in cash or kind, belong to the Badavas. Every night, a divaskar or a 'priest for the day' is chosen for the next twenty-four hours from amongst themselves by the Badavas. He is to collect all the offerings and to provide the oil, sweets, panchamrit etc. necessary for the worship. Next to the Badavas are the 'Pujaris' who are in charge of the actual worship rituals. They undress the image, bathe it, put flowers and garlands around it and wave the lights at the time of the aratis. These tasks are performed by none else than the Pujaris. The Benaris are the hymnists who recite the various Sanskrit mantras required for each rite. The Pujaris have some assistants known as the Paricharakas. They provide the water necessary to bathe the god and get ready the lamps and incense. The counterpart of the Benari in the arati sessions is the Haridas. The Haridas sings devotional songs, mostly from the literature of the Varkaris, saints etc. He sings to the accompani-

ment of 'tals', small brass cymbals, but he is not allowed into the garbhagriha, he is to stand in the antarala. When the god is dressed and scented oil applied to his face, the Dingres hold a mirror in front of him. The other duty of the Dingres is to spread the red-carpet known as 'Paul-ghadi' before the image when the god retires for the day. The hereditary torch-bearers are known as Divate, probably from 'divati' meaning a torch. The torches are to be held when the god is going to his bed-chamber and in the processions of Vithoba's palkhi. The mace-bearers are the Danges. The Paricharaks and Danges distribute the 'Bhasma' after the worships are over. Just as Vittal has his priests and servants, Rakhumai has the Utpatas as her priests. Historical records mention that quarrels often took place between the various cadres of the priests and as already stated the then government had to intervene in the dispute and define the respective duties and rights of the various sections.

There are several shrines at Pandharpur in addition to that of Pundalik, Vitthal and Rakhumai. Of these the most well-known and important is the Vishnupad. In the river bed three-quarters of a mile to the south of Pundalik's temple, reached by a low causeway of rough stones is the temple of Vishnupad. The temple is built on a rock in the river bed. Its plinth is nearly seven feet high and flights of steps lead upto the floor-level from all the four sides. The temple is an open hall or mandap thirty-one feet square and twelve feet in height. It is constructed of stone masonry and its flat roof is supported by sixteen pillars of stone. During the rainy season when the river is in spate, the Vishnupad temple is under water, and this period often extends to well over three months. Even otherwise the water level is not too much below the floor of the temple and as an indicator to the state of the temple it is stated that whenever water touches the base of the

Pundalik temple, half of Vishnupad is submerged. In the middle of the square is a small square measuring five feet by five enclosed within a railing. In this central square, which is the shrine of the temple, are three rocks, with the foot-prints of the god Krishna and of a cow. The god's foot-prints are in two positions. In one pair he is standing on both the feet, with the marks hollow as if the rock has yielded like half dry mud. In the other pair of foot-prints the god stands on the left-foot, with the right foot crossed and resting on the toes. In front of these marks is a cup-shaped hollow which is said to be the cup from which the god ate. At each corner of the square is a cow's foot-print. A small hollow in front of the second pair of prints was caused by the god's staff. On a pillar of the shrine is an image of Krishna standing with right leg crossed and playing on a flute. On another pillar is the image of Vishnu with four arms, holding a shankh, chakra, gada and padma. These foot-prints are worshipped every forenoon by the agents of the Badavas. The most important ceremony concerning this shrine is held in the month of Margashirsha. On the first day of this month the sandals or padukas of Vithoba are taken to this temple of Vishnu-pad and on the last day of the same month Vithoba's chariot is brought to this temple in a huge procession. In the evening the padukas are brought back to the Vitthal temple with a grand torch-light procession, and are then lodged in the bed-chamber. It is supposed that during this month Vitthal goes to the Vishnupad and like Krishna feasts there with other cowherds. This also explains why numerous people bring picnick parties at the temple and the surrounding rocks and hold vanabhojanas.

The chief significance of this spot, as far as the kshetra goes, is that it is here that 'shraddha' ceremonies are to be performed. The balls or pindas that stand for the ancestors are set in the holy square, especially on the foot-prints and

are worshipped there. After the ceremony is over the balls are deposited in the river. A Varkari may or may not perform the rite here, but for a casual visitor it is one of the 'musts'. The causeway is useless for many months and small ferries carry the pilgrim to the spot.

A pious visitor would find that he would be able to visit temples of all the deities, of the various avataras and aspects of Vishnu, Shiva and the devi. Most of these are from the eighteenth century although some show traces of earlier architectural remains and many are referred to in the literature of the pre-eighteenth century period.

No account of the Vitthal of Pandharpur could be complete without a sketch of the Varkari panth and the great palanquin processions from various places in Maharashtra to Pandharpur. The Varkaris and the Vitthal cannot be separated. To anybody who knows something of the cultural history of the region, the mention of the name of the one automatically reminds of the other. The Varkari is a picturesque figure. Although when moving about in his routine daily life he does not make himself conspicuous through any special dress or sectarian symbols, the Varkari when he moves out for his vari or trip to Pandharpur does have a peculiar aspect. His dress consists of the ordinary shirt and dhoti with a turban or a cap, but he will be carrying the 'tals' or small cymbals in his hands, a rosary of tulshi-beads would be conspicuously seen around his neck and he would inevitably carry the saffron flag from a short stick. It is the congregation of these Varkaris so turned out, that make the palanquin procession so very picturesque. Who is a Varkari? The word vari means a trip or pilgrimage to that place during the Ashadh and Kartik months. One who undertakes this vari is a Varkari. Literally speaking, the meaning of the word vari is a thing or a feature recurring at fixed intervals. Unlike visitors the Varkari is bound to attend the ekadashi

fairs of these two months every year. He would take care to fulfil this duty most faithfully. On reaching Pandharpur, a snana in the Chandrabhaga, the darshan of Pundalik and above all the darshan of Vitthal are the chief rites, if they can be called as such, that he is to perform. The Vithoba is the sole object of his devotion, of his bhakti.

The Varkaris, although apart from the rest of the society, in that they have bound themselves to the devotion of a particular deity, to perform the biannual pilgrimage to Pandharpur, to do nothing that can be construed as a breach of the accepted modes of saintly conduct, do not form a brotherhood or community like the sanyasins or Nath-sampradayins. They do not renounce the material aspects of day to day life. And although their philosophy teaches them to dissociate mentally from the material world it does not advise renunciation as such and hence they continue to live in society and pursue their professions as the rest of the people. They come from all castes and classes. Their separate identity is never emphasised to such a degree as to mar the basic unity of the Hindu society. The 'initiation' into the panth is usually done through some 'guru' or spiritual leader and as a mark of the initiation, the new recruit wears the tulshi bead rosary, a mala, and for that reason a Varkari is often known as a malakari. The wearing of a mala binds the man not only to perform the pilgrimages but imposes the strictest sort of taboo against non-vegetarian food. He has to take only vegetarian dishes and to observe fasts on the ekadashi days. More often than not the Varkaris form a mandali or society for singing of the Bhajans either on each ekadashi day or some fixed day of the week. Here songs written by ancient sages in praise of Vithal are sung to the accompaniment of tala and pakhvaj, a sort of drum.

The philosophic background for this panth is provided by the literature of Marathi-saints dating back from the

twelfth century. The most important single work that can be cited is of course, the *Jnyaneshvari*, a commentary on the *Bhagvadgita* by Jnyaneshvar. Unlike the northern followers of the Bhagvat sect, who are followers of Ramanuja, and who belong to the Dvaita school, the Varkaris of Pandharpur are the followers of Jnyaneshvar and the Advaita system preached by him. The mass of the literature of the later saints preaches devotion in a pure and a simple form as the one way to ultimate salvation.

The panth has no recognised head, it does not constitute itself like a church or a monastical order and hence the question of formal leadership does not arise. However, this is not to imply that there are no leaders or preachers among the Varkaris. There are several of them. The Varkaris naturally gather together around a person who is spiritually more advanced than the rest or is a better exponent of the philosophical aspects of their cult. Recently there is seen the phenomenon of several gurus having their well-knit groups and maths or monasteries, inside the Varkari panth. Thus there are the followers of the late Shri Gadge Maharaj, then the lady devotee of Panduranga, by name of Manmadkar commands a large following from amongst the Varkaris. These groups have their own rest-houses and other facilities at Pandharpur. Still more recently attempts have been made to introduce the teaching of political philosophies or to educate the masses through the medium of bhajans and kirtans and one such performance the author had an opportunity of attending was the very reverse of the hitherto known traditions of the varkari sect. The Varkaris, all along in their history of nearly a thousand years, have been nothing less and nothing more than the devotees of Vitthal. What changes in the panth, if any, the changing social and political pattern may bring about is difficult to say.

The mainspring of the inspiration of the Varkari faith is, as already indicated the literature of Marathi saints. Following the needs of time these saints have resorted to the poetical form of expression, the abhangas, for their teachings. According to all Varkari traditions Pundalik is the first great devotee of Vitthal. He was responsible for bringing Vitthal to Pandharpur and as such his position is unequalled. Next comes Jnyaneshvar. His *Jnyaneshvari* and *Amritanubhava* are of fundamental importance as far as the philosophy of the cult goes. His contemporary Namdev enjoys great prestige and his abhangas are greatly popular. His samadhi is below the entrance to the Vitthal shrine. He was an able Haridas and his kirtans attracted vast masses to the sandy banks of the Bhima. It is known that his influence was also felt in the northern regions of the country and *Granthasahib*, the sacred book of the Sikhs contains some passages from his pen. Then comes the name of Bhanudas, whose name has already appeared in the earlier paragraphs. During the sixteenth century it was Eknath, the great-grandson of Bhanudas that was active in the field. He has several important literary contributions to his credit. His first attempt was directed towards bringing out an edition of *Jnyaneshvari* in a form that would be as close to the original as possible. For this purpose he collected a number of old manuscripts and edited the entire text. It is this text that forms the basis of the modern editions of the famous work. His *Bhavarth Ramayana* and his commentary on the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavat Purana, known as *Ekanathi Bhagavat*, are the more well-known of his works. Next in chronological sequence comes Tukaram that famous saint of Dehu. He was a contemporary of Shivaji and belonged to the vani community. His abhangas are some of the most moving and passionate devotional songs composed by the devotees of Vitthal. Their influence is

undiminished even today. Janabai, Chokha-mela, Gora-kumbhar, Savata-mali all have composed a large number of abhangas that are greatly popular.

The visible public manifestation of the Varkari cult are during the Ashadhi and Kartiki fairs held at Pandharpur. Numerous people trek their way to Pandharpur on foot, in the company of the palanquins of the various saints. Approximately a month before the Pandharpur yatra in Ashadha the palanquins containing the padukas and masks of the saints are taken out from the places where they have been laid to rest. The palkhi of Jnyaneshvar sets out from Alandi while that of Tukaram from Dehu, from Tryambakeshvar goes that of Nivrittinath, and from Paithan that of Ekanath. Nearly sixty palanquins from all over Maharashtra flock to Pandharpur. Each palkhi is accompanied by a number of Dindis or bhajan parties who sing the abhangas of various saints along the route. The procession reaches Pandharpur on the tenth day of the latter half of the month, that is one day before the ekadashi.

The whole area is full of Varkaris, of all ages and descriptions and the atmosphere is full of the cheers that have echoed throughout the length and breadth of the country for hundreds of years, 'Jai Jai Vithoba-Rakhumai', Jai Jai Vithoba-Rakhumai!'

Pandharpur :

१ आधी रचिली पंढरी । मग वैकुंठ नगरी ।
जेव्हां नव्हते चराचर । तें होते पंढरपुर ।
जेव्हां नव्हती गोदागंगा । तेव्हां होती चद्रभागा ।
चंद्रभागेच्या तटी । धन्य पंढरी गोमटी ।
नासिलीया भूमंडळ । उरे पंढरी मंडळ ।
असे सुदर्शनावरी । म्हणूनि अविनाशी पंढरी ।
नामा म्हणे श्रीहरी । ते म्यां देखिली पंढरी ।

Pandhari was created first, only then Vaikuntha-nagari Pandharpur was in existence even when nothing (else)

with or without life existed.
Chandrabhaga was there even when Ganga and Godavari were yet to be born.
Blessed is the auspicious Pandhari that stands on the banks of the Bhima.
Pandharpur remains undisturbed even when the rest of the world goes to pieces.
Its foundation is nothing less than the Sudarshan chakra (of Vishnu) and hence its indestructible nature.
Oh Shri Hari, I have seen with my eyes this Pandhari says Nama.

—*Namdev.*

२ पंढरीचा वास चंद्रभागे स्नान ।
आणिक दर्शन विठोबाचे ।
हेचि मज घडो जन्मोजन्मांतरी
मागणे श्रीहरी नाहीं दुजे ।

Oh Shri Hari I ask for nothing else than that I should be able, in all my future births, to avail myself of the residence at Pandharpur, of the dip in the Chandrabhaga and the darshan of Vithoba, so says Nama.

—*Namdev.*

३ बहुत हिंडलो देश देशांतर । परि मन स्थिर नाही झाले कोठे ।
बहुत तीर्थे फिरोनिया आलो । मनासवे झालो वेडगळची ।
बहुत प्रतिमा ऐकिल्या पाहिल्या । मनाच्या राहिल्या येरझारा ।
चोखा म्हणे पाहता पंढरी भूवैकुंठ । मनाचे हे कष्ट दूर गेले ।

I have travelled far and wide, have seen many countries and lands. However, nowhere was my mind attached.
I have visited various tirths, but the confusion in the mind did not end.
I have seen numerous images, heard of (the greatness of) many more, but the mind is still uneasy.
My mind was at peace only when I saw Pandhari, the Vaikunth on this earth, says Chokha.

—*Chokha Mela.*

The above three verses, two by Namdev and the last one by the Mahar saint Chokha Mela describe most aptly the veneration in which the Varkaris hold the 'Pandhari' and also the chief rites that are performed there by a regular visitor. The following verse is from the pen of Tukaram and describes the Vitthal image.

४ सुन्दर ते ध्यान उभे विटेवरी । कर कटावरी ठेवोनिया ।
तुळसीहार गळा कासे पितांबर । आवडे निरंतर ध्यान हेचि ।
मकरकुंडले तळपति श्रवणी । कंठी कौस्तुभमणि विराजमान ।
तुका म्हणे माझे हेचि सर्व सुख । पाहीन श्रीमुख आवडीने ।

The beautiful form (dhyana) stands on the brick; arms rest on the hips.

Around his neck is the Tulashi-mala; his garment is the Pitambar (a yellow silken dhoti). I always like this aspect.

In the ears shine the Makar-kundals; the Kausthubha-mani adorns his neck.

Tuka says I am full to the brink with happiness when I see this Shri-mukha (the face of the god).

Poems number five, six and seven are aratis to be recited in the morning when waking up the god. The content of all the three are similar to each other. All state that devotees have gathered outside the temple to meet the god and request him to get up and give them his darshan.

५ उठा उठा हो साधक । साधा आपुलाले हित ।
गेला गेला नरदेह । मग कैंचा भगवंत ।
उठा हो वेगेसी । चला जाऊ राऊळासी ।
झडतील पातकांच्या राशी । काकड आरती पाहोनी ।
जागे करा लक्ष्मीवरा । देव आहे निजसुरा ।
वेगे लिंबलोण करा । दृष्ट होईल म्हणोनि ।
उठोनिया हो पाहाटे । पाहा विठ्ठल उभा विटे ।
चरण तयाचे गोमटे । अमृत दृष्टि अवलोका ।
पुढे वाजंत्री वाजती । ढोल धमामे गर्जती ।
होत काकड आरती । माझ्या पंढरीरायाची ।

सिंहनाद शंखभेरी । गजर होतो महाद्वारी ।
केशवराज विटेवरी । नामा चरण वंदितो ।

६ उठा उठा हो वेगेसी । चला जाऊ पंढरीसी ।
भेटा विठ्ठल रखुमाईसी । त्रिविधताप हरतील ।
चद्रभागे करूं स्नान । घे ऊं पुंडलीकाचे दर्शन ।
तेथे भेटति संतजन । तेणे मन निवेल ।
गंगा यमुना सरस्वती । कृष्णा वेण्या भागीरथी ।
तुंगभद्रा भोगावती । येती श्रीपति दर्शना ।
तापी नर्मदा कावेरी । पंचगगा गोदावरी ।
स्नाने केलिया बोहरी । महादोष हरतील ।
रामानंदाचे माहेर । क्षेत्रनाम पंढरपुर ।
मातापिता विश्वंभर । पैलतीर तरतील ।

७ ओवाळिती काकड आरती । पांडुरंगा तुजप्रती ।
चरण दावी जगत्पति । स्तवितो पंढरी तुज आदिमूर्ति ।
भक्तजन येवोनिया । द्वारी उभे स्वामीराया ।
चरण तुझे पहावया । तिष्ठतो मी भक्त प्रीती ।
पूर्ण ब्रह्म देवादिदेव । निरंजनी तुझा ठाव ।
भक्तांसाठी देहभाव । धरिसी तू विश्वपति ।
भक्तांचा कैवारी । समर्थांचा निर्धारी ।
हेत ठेवूनी चरणावरी । गातो आम्ही तुझी स्तुती ।
देवा तूचि कृपाघन । उठून देई दर्शन ।
चरणकमल वंदोन । मागतसे कृपादान ।

The following is the most popular arati of Vitthal. Out of these verses number three and four are not recited usually by the Varkaris. The poet is Namdev and is praying the lord of Rahi and Rukmini to favour him.

८ युगे अठ्ठावीस विटेवरी उभा
वामांगी रखुमाई दिसे दिव्य शोभा
पुंडलिकाचे भेटी परब्रह्म आलेगा
चरणी वाहे भीमा उद्धरी जगा
जय देव जय देव जय पांडुरंगा ।
रखुमाई वल्लभा राहीच्या वल्लभा पावे जिवलगा ।। १ ।।

तुळसीमाळा गळा कर ठेऊनी कटी ।
कासे पीतांबर कस्तुरी लल्लाटी ।
देव सुख नित्य येती भेटी ।
गरूड हनुमंत पुढे राहती ।। २ ।।

धन्य वेणुनाद अनुक्षेत्रपाला
सुवर्णाची कमळे वनमाळा गळा
राही रखुमाबाई राणीया सकळा
ओवाळिती राजा विठोबा सावळा ।। ३ ।।

ओवाळू आरत्या कुर्वंड्या येती
चंद्रभागे माजी सोडुनिया देती
दिंड्या पताका वैष्णव नाचती
पंढरीचा महिमा वर्णावा किती ।। ४ ।।

आषाढी कार्तिकी भक्तजन येती
चंद्रभागे माजी स्नान जे करिती
दर्शन हेळा मात्रे तया होय मुक्ति
केशवासी नामदेव भावे ओवाळीती ।। ५ ।।

The verse by verse gist would be somewhat as follows :

Vitthal on whose left is Rakhumai is standing on the brick for the last twenty-eight ages. He has come to Pandharpur to visit Pundalik. At his feet is flowing Bhima that benefits the world.

In front of him stand Garuda and Hanuman, on his forehead is smeared musk, around his neck is a rosary of Tulashi beads, his arms rest on the waist, he wears a pitambar and gods come to meet him.

Around his neck is a garland of golden lotuses, and Rahi and Rakhumabai pray him.

The devotees sing aratis in his praise and dance with joy on the banks of the Chandrabhaga, they carry saffron flags. Devotees gather here on the Ashadh and Kartik elevenths (ekadashis), take bath in the Chandrabhaga and are absolved of all sin on the darshan of Vitthal.

Poems number nine and ten are aratis sung at the time of putting the god to bed. Both state that the god is fatigued and deserves rest, request that the devotees be dismissed and that the god should go to his abode where Rahi and Rakhumai are waiting for him.

९ उठा भागलेती उजगरा । चला स्वामी निद्रा करा ।
वाट पहाते रुक्मिणी । उभी मंचक सावरोनी ।
केली करा क्षमा । बडबड पुरुषोत्तमा ।
लागतो चरणा । तुकया बंधु नारायणा ।

१० शेज सिद्ध झाली अहो निजा श्रीधरा ।
आज्ञा द्यावी लोका जाती आपुल्या घरा ।
रात्र झाली बहु देवा चला मंदिरा ।
वाट पाहति राही रखुमाई सुन्दरा ।।
तुम्हासी मिरासी देवा झाली पंढरी ।
विठ्ठल चरणी गोंदा उभा राहिला हरी ।।

GLOSSARY

This is a collection of words either Sanskrit or Marathi that occur frequently in the text of the book and come either from the legendary literature or the ritualistic vocabulary used in connection with the several temples and deities described in the text. First is given the spelling of the word as used in the text, then its pronunciation is indicated by diacritical marks (in brackets) and lastly follows the meaning.

Abhang (Abhaṅga) . . A devotional song.

Abhishek (Abhiṣeka) . . A constant drizzle of water from a pot hanging over an image, especially a Shiva ling.

Abhishek-patra (Abhiṣeka-pātra) . . A pot with a minute perforation at the bottom from which drops of water constantly fall on the image.

Adi (Ādi) . . The beginning.

Akhada (Ākhāḍā) . . Normally the word means a ring meant for wrestling bouts, but as far as it pertains to Tryambakeshvar it means a monastery.

Akshamala (Akṣamālā) . . A rosary of beads.

Alamkara (Alaṅkāra) . . Ornaments.

Alamkara-puja (Alaṅkāra-pūjā) A worship at the time of which the image is decked out in all its ornaments.

Amalaka (Āmalaka) . . A member of the architectural scheme of the shikhar of a temple. It resembles the amalaka' fruit in shape.

Amsha (Aṁśa) . . Part or partial.
Anandi (Anādi) . . Without a beginning.
Ananta (Ananta) . . Without an end.
Angara (Aṅgārā) . . Sacred ash smeared on the forehead.
Angarkha (Aṅgarakhā) . . A long flowing coat.
Annachhatra (Annachatra) . . An inn where food is distributed free of charge.
Arati (Āratī) . . An extremely commonplace temple ritual. There are two parts to it. One is singing of a prayer and the other waving of the lights before the god.
Asana (Āsana) . . A seat.
Ashram (Āśrama) . . The dwelling of a spiritual preacher where he himself and his pupils live.
Ashvattha (Aśvattha) . . The pipal tree.
Astra (Astra) . . A supernatural weapon.
Asur (Asura) . . A demonic people.
Atithi (Ātithi) . . A guest.
Avatar (Avatāra) . . Incarnation.
Avatarana (Avataraṇa) . . Descent. (Especially of the Ganges or some other river from the heavens.)
Ayudha (Āyudha) . . A weapon, as far as inconographic references go it means an attribute of a deity.
Bagad (Bagāḍa) . . A religious rite performed to fulfil a vow taken before the god Khadoba. It entails the suspension of a person, on an iron hook thrust in the body, from a tall pole. This custom is legally banned for many years now.

Bhajan (*Bhajaṅa*) . . Singing of a devotional songs. Various Varkaris form parties to sing the bhajans either on the ekadashi days or on some fixed day of a week. Followers of other sects like the Kabir-panth also form similar parties

Bhakt (*Bhakta*) . . A devotee.

Bhakti (*Bhakti*) . . Devotion.

Bhute (*Bhute*) . . A caste or class of the devotees of the goddess Amba.

Brahmarakshasa (*Brahmarākṣasa*) . . A class of supernatural, ghostly beings.

Bukka (*Bukkā*) . . A black powder used in worship.

Chakra (*Cakra*) . . A wheel, especially the one carried by Vishnu as his weapon, the Sudarshanchakra.

Chaturvarnya (*Cāturvarṇya*) . . The fourfold division of Hindu society.

Chaughada (*Caughaḍā*) . . A band of musicians whose chief instrument is a huge drum known as nagara.

Chhabina (*Chabinā*) . . A palanquin procession.

Chirjivin (*Cirajīvin*) . . An immortal soul.

Dhanurvidya (*Dhanurvidyā*) . . The art of archery.

Dharmashala (*Dharmaśālā*) . . A rest-house.

Dhupa (*Dhūpa*) . . Incence.

Dhyana (*Dhyāna*) . . Form or aspect esp. of a deity.

Dindi (*Diṇḍī*) . . A group or party of bhajan singers accompanying the palanquins to Pandharpur.

Dipmala (*Dīpmālā*) . . A column from which several brackets project to carry lamps.

Dwadashi (*Dwādśī*) . . The twelfth day of every fortnight.

Dwarapala (*Dwārapāla*) . . A door-keeper.

Ekadashi (*Ekādaśi*) . . The eleventh day of every fortnight. It is important to the Varkari sect and a fast is observed by them on each ekadashi.

Ekadashini (*Ekādaśinī*) . . A religious rite wherein abhisheka is performed on a Shiva ling eleven times, the Rudra Samhita being recited along with each abhisheka.

Gada (*Gadā*) . . A mace.

Gana (*Gaṇa*) . . A follower of Shiva.

Gandharva (*Gaṁdharva*) . . A celetial being.

Garbhgriha (*Garbhagṛha*) . . A cell or shrine which actually contains the deity or image.

Gati (*Gati*) . . Literally mention, as far as legends go, the power to move about as desired.

Ghat (*Ghāṭa*) . . A flight of steps.

Grihasthadharna (*Gṛhasthdharma*) . . The proper made of conduct for a married person.

Guna (*Guṇa*) . . Au attribute.

Halad (*Halada*) . . A yellow powder, turmeric.

Hom-kund (*Homa-kuṇḍa*) . . Altar.

Ichhabhojan (*Ichābhojana*) . . Meals in which the host serves whatever kind of food the guest desires.

Inam (*Inām*) .. A grant of land or money.
Jagir (*Jāgir*) .. A grant of land.
Jagrit (*Jagṛta*) .. Literally, awake; meaning alive, watchful and active as far as applied to a deity.
Jata (*Jaṭā*) .. Locks of hair.
Jata-mukut (*Jaṭā-mukuṭa*) .. A knot of hair wound on the head.
Jayanti (*Jayanti*) .. Birth-day.
Jnyana (*Jñana*) .. Knowledge.
Kakad-arati (*Kākaḍa-āratī*) .. An arati sung to the accompaniment of a torch-Kakada.
Kalash (*Kalaśa*) .. A water pot. A motif used in temple architecture, placed on the top of the shikhar, resembling a water pot.
Kama (*Kāma*) .. Love.
Kamandalu (*Kamaṇḍalu*) .. A water pot.
Kavadi (*Kavaḍī*) .. Cowri, a shell.
Khetaka (*Kheṭaka*) .. A shield.
Kirtan (*Kīrtan*) .. A concert in which the performer narrates a mythological story to illustrate and expand a religious theme or some philosophical thought.
Krodha (*Krodha*) .. Anger or spite.
Kshama (*Kṣamā*) .. Mercy or pity.
Kshatriya (*Kṣatriya*) .. The warrior caste.
Kshaur (*Kṣaura*) Shaving one's hair, a religious rite performed after the death of a near relative.
Kshetra (*kṣetra*) .. A religious centre.
Kshetropadhyaya (*Kṣetropādhyāya*) .. A priest acting as a professional host at a kshetra.

Kula (*Kula*) .. Family.
Kula-devata (*Kula-devatā*) Family deity.
Kula-swamini (*Kula-swāminī*) .. Family goddess.
Kumkum (*Kuṅkuma*) .. A red powder used in worship.
Kund (*Kuṇḍa*) .. A tank.
Kundala (*Kuṇḍala*) .. An ear-ring.
Kurta (*Kurtā*) .. A shirt.
Lakshana (*Lakṣaṇa*) .. Attribute.
Lobha (*Lobha*) .. Greed.
Loka (*Loka*) .. The various worlds like Swarga, Patala etc. described in the legends.
Mada (*Mada*) .. Pride or excessive pride.
Madhukari (*Madhukari*) .. A form of begging wherein the one asking for it is supposed to be devoting himself to teaching or learning or is a sa
Mahanaivedya (*Mahānaivedya*) .. The most important offering of the day made to the deity.
Mahanta (*Mahanta*) : . Head of a monastery.
Maha-puja (*Mahā-pūjā*) .. The most important worship of the day.
Mala (*Mālā*) .. A rosary.
Malakari (*Māḷkari*) .. One who is wearing a rosary. In this case one who wears a rosary of Tulshi beads as a symbol of his devotion to Vitthal esp. his being a Varkari.
Mandali (*Maṇḍaḷī*) .. A party of bhajan singers.
Mandap (*Maṇḍapa*) .. A hall.
Mantra (*Maṁtra*) .. A hymn.
Matha (*Matha*) .. A monastery.

Matsara (*Matsara*) . . Jealousy.
Matuling (*Matuliñga*) . . A gadrooned fruit.
Maunjibandhana (*Mauñjibandhana*) . . The thread ceremony.
Maya (*Māyā*) . . Illusion or the power of creating one.
Moha (*Moha*) . . Lust.
Moksha (*Mokṣa*) . . Ultimate salvation.
Mukut (*Mukuṭa*) . . Crown.
Murali (*Muraḷī*) . . A female servant of Khandoba.
Nagari (*Nagari*) . . A city or town.
Nagarkhana (*Nagārkhānā*) . . A drum house taking its name after the chief musical instrument, 'Nagara' that it houses.
Naivedya (*Naivedya*) . . An offering to a diety.
Nandadip (*Nandādīpa*) . . A lamp burning constantly in a shrine.
Navas (*Navasa*) . . A vow taken before a god and to be fulfilled when the demand made is satisfied.
Nidra (*Nidrā*) . . Sleep or rest.
Nivas (*Nivāsa*) . . A house or a place of rest.
Paduka (*Pādukā*) . . Foot-Prints or sandals.
Padya (*Pādya*) . . Water for washing feet.
Pagdi (*Pagaḍi*) . . A headgear used in the Peshwa times.
Pakhvaj (*Pakhavāja*) . . A kind of two-faced drum used in bhajans and kirtans.
Palkhi (*Pālakhī*) . . A palanquin, also used to denote a palanquin procession.
Panchamrit (*Pañcāmṛta*) . . The five nectars consisting of ghee, milk, curds, honey and sugar.
Pan-patra (*Pāna-pātra*) . . A drinking bowl.

Panth (*Paṇtha*) . . A school of thought.
Parigha (*Parigha*) . . A huge wheel used as a weapon.
Pasha (*Pāśa*) . . Noose.
Pishachcha (*Piśācca*) . . A ghost.
Pith (*Pīṭha*) . . Place of residence of a diety, habitat.
Poshakha (*Poṣākha*) . . Dress.
Pota (*Pota*) . . A torch made of rope.
Prabhavala (*Prabhāvaḷa*) . . Halo, a circular ring from which rays are radiating, placed immediately behind an image.
Prakara (*Prākāra*) . . The surrounding courtyard or area of a temple or building.
Prasada (*Prasāda*) . . The gift of the god.
Prasada (*Prāsāda*) . . A mansion.
Pravachana (*Pravacana*) . . A discourse on a philosophical topic.
Prayaschitta (*Prāyaścitta*) . . Punishment.
Puja (*Pūjā*) . . Worship.
Pujari (*Pujārī*) . . A priest who carries out the actual worship.
Pandit (*Paṇḍita*) . . A learned person.
Punya (*Puṇya*) . . Good as against bad or *papa*, accumulated by a person as a result of his deeds.
Punya-karma (*Puṇya-karma*) . . A deed resulting in punya.
Rangashila (*Raṅgaśīlā*) . . A stone platform used for dance or musical performances before a diety.
Raudra (*Raudra*) . . The fierce aspect of a diety or nature.
Rishi (*Ṛṣi*) . . A mendicant.

Rupa (*Rūpa*) .. Form or aspect.

Sabhamandap (*Sabhāmaṇḍapa*) .. An audience hall.

Sadhu (*Sādhu*) .. A wandering mendicant.

Sakama-bhakti (*Sakāma-bhakti*) .. Devotion or worship of a deity with a view to achieve some material ends.

Samadhi (*Samādhi*) .. A structure built over the spot where a person is burried or cremated. Self emolation.

Sambal (*Saṁbaḷa*) .. A drum.

Sampradaya (*Sāmpradāya*) .. A School of thought or an Order of the followers of a particular school.

Sampradayin (*Sāmpradāyin*) .. One who belongs to such a school.

Sanad (*Sanada*) .. A charter.

Sanyasin (*Sannyāsin*) .. A recluse, one who has totally renounced the material side of the world.

Seva (*Sevā*) .. Service especially to a deity.

Sevak (*Sevaka*) .. One who performs such service.

Sevekari (*Sevekarī*) .. One who performs such service.

Shad-ripu (*Ṣad-ripu*) .. The six enemies of man viz. love, greed, lust, pride, jealousy and anger.

Shakini (*Ṣākinī*) .. A female gana of Shiva.

Shakta (*Ṣākta*) .. An Order devoted to the worship of Shakti. A person belonging to such an Order.

Shakti (*Ṣakti*) .. The goddess as the ultimate principal underlying the world.

Shankh (*Śaṅkha*) . . A conch.

Shejghar (*Sejaghara*) . . Shej is a bed, from it, shejghar is a room housing the bed, bed-room.

Shesha (*Śeṣa*) . . The divine cobra on whose hood rests the earth according to Hindu mythology.

Shraddha (*Śrāddha*) . . The memorial service for one's parents or near relatives.

Shukla (*Śukla*) . . Literally white, as applied to a fortnight it means the fortnight in which the moon is growing.

Shula (*Śūla*) . . A spike or pole.

Sana (*Snāna*) . . A bath.

Stambha (*Staṁbha*) . . A pillar or column.

Sthan (*Sthāna*) . . A habitat.

Swayambhu (*Swayaṁbhū*) . . Self-created or self-evident.

Tal (*Tāḷa*) . . A pair of small brass cymbals.

Tapa (*Tapa*) . . Penance.

Tapasvin (*Tapasvin*) . . One who is performing a penance.

Tapobala (*Tapobala*) . . Power accumulated through penance.

Tathastu (*Tathāstu*) . . 'Be it as you desire'

Tirth (*Tirth*) . . Holy waters.

Tulashi (*Tuḷaśi*) . . A kind of small plant out of the wood of which small beds are made.

Tuntune (*Tuṇatuṇe*) . . A musical instrument with a single string.

Vadya (*Vadya*) . . The dark fortnight.

Vaghe or Vaghya (*Vāghe or Vāghyā*) . . A male servant of Khandoba.

Vahan (*Vahāna*) .. A carrier or symbol of a deity.

Vanaprasthashram (*Vānaprasthāśrama*). . The third phase of a man's life, the other there being Brahmacharya, Grihastha and Sanyasa.

Varkari (*Vārakarī*) One who has accepted the Vitthal of Pandharpur as his only deity and bound himself to go to that place every year.

Vidhi (*Vidhi*) .. A rite.

Vidya (*Vidyā*) .. A branch of knowledge.

Virgala (*Vīrgaḷa*) .. A memorial stone.

Vratabhandh (*Vratabaṅdha*) .. Thread-ceremony.

Upachara (*Upacāra*) .. A rite from the worship ritual.

Upadyaya (*Upādhyāya*) .. A priest.

Utsava (*Utsava*) .. A festival.

Utsava-murti (*Utsava-murtī*) .. An image, usually a minature of the temple's chief deity, chiefly used in rituals like processions etc, as removing the chief image is inadvisable.

Yaksha (*Yakṣa*) .. A member of supernatural species.

Yatra (*Yātrā*) .. A pilgrimage.

Yatrik (*Yātrika*) .. A pilgrim.

Yuga (*Yuga*) .. An age.

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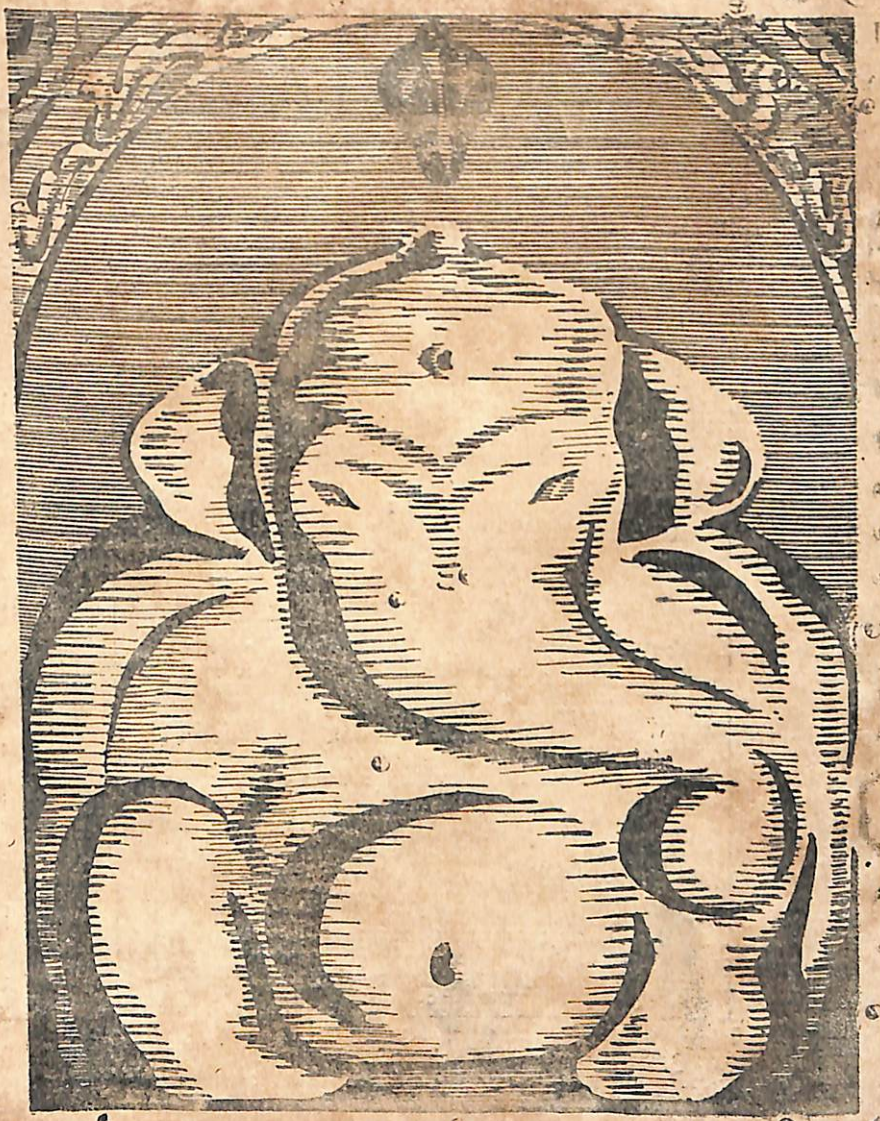
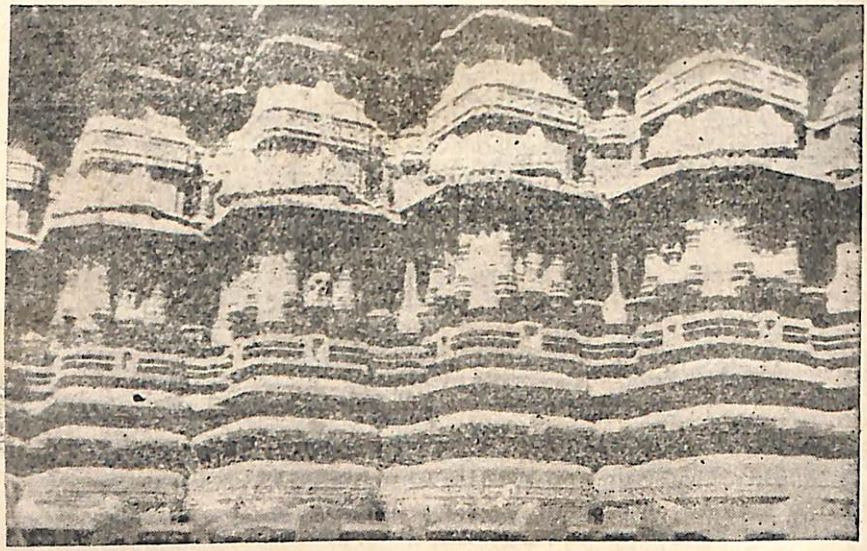


1. Shri Mayureshvar, Morgaon

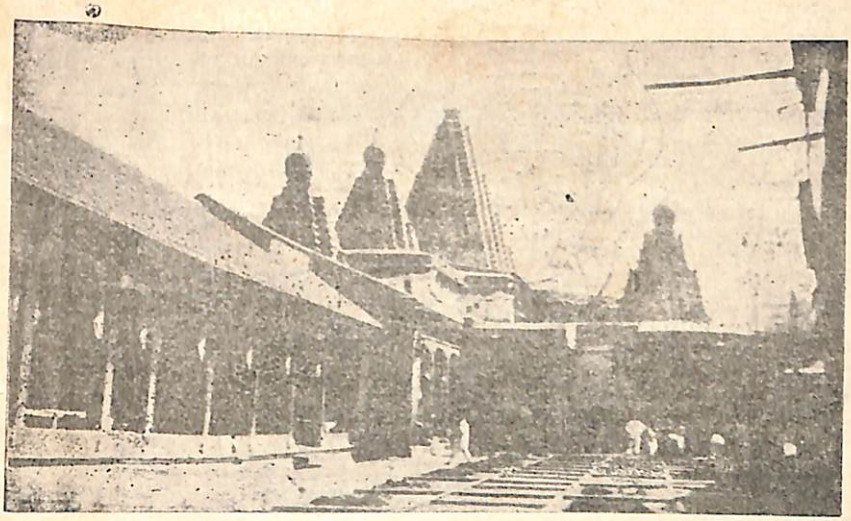
2. Ganesh Temple, Morgaon : Shikhar

3. Ganesh Temple, Morgaon : Entrance

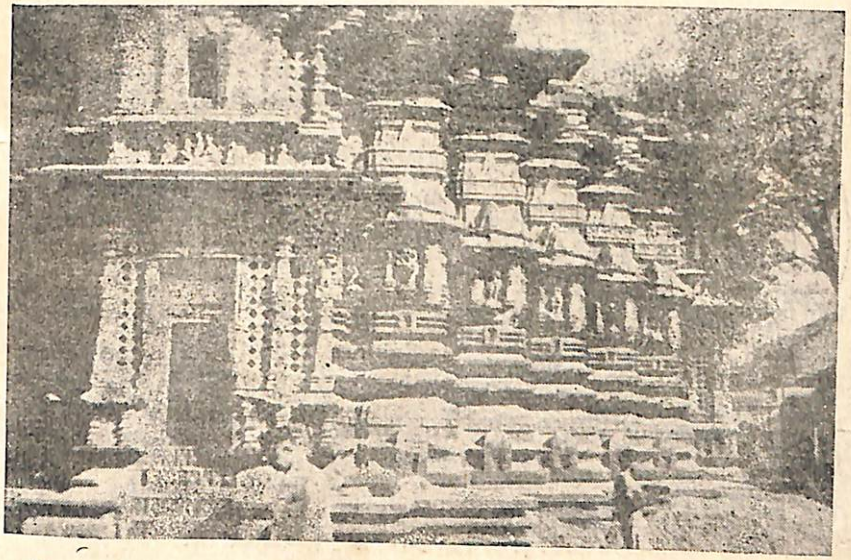
4. Mahalakshmi Temple, Kolhapur : Mahadvara



5. Mahalakshmi Temple, Kolhapur : Mouldings and Walls

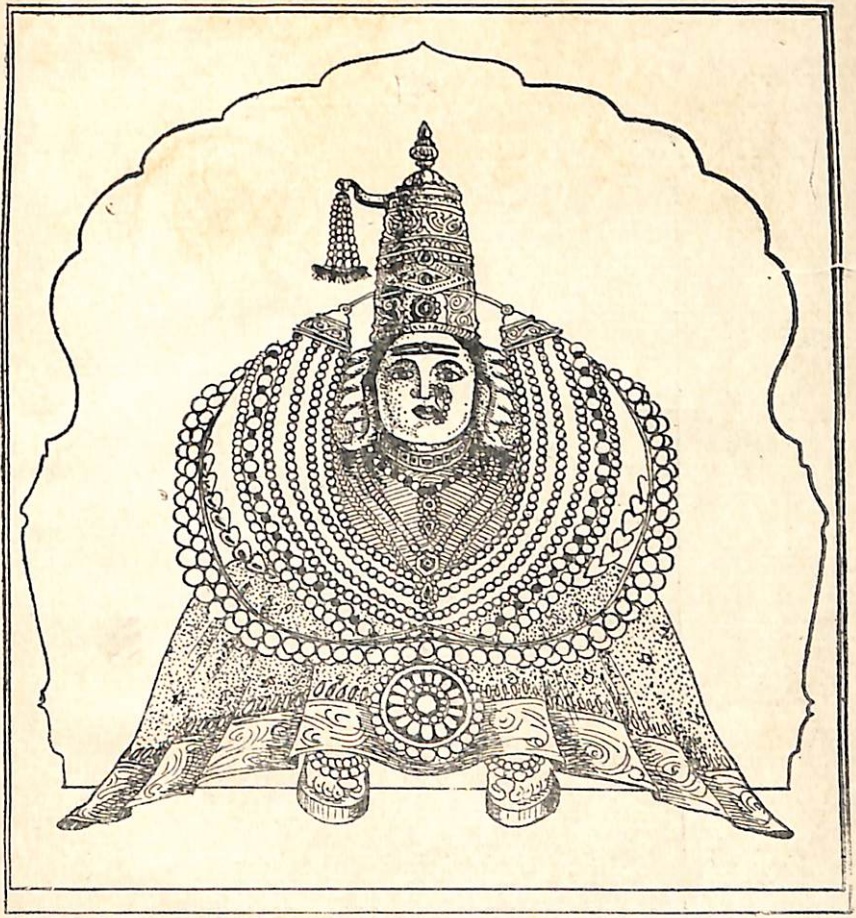


6. Mahalakshmi Temple, Kolhapur : General view



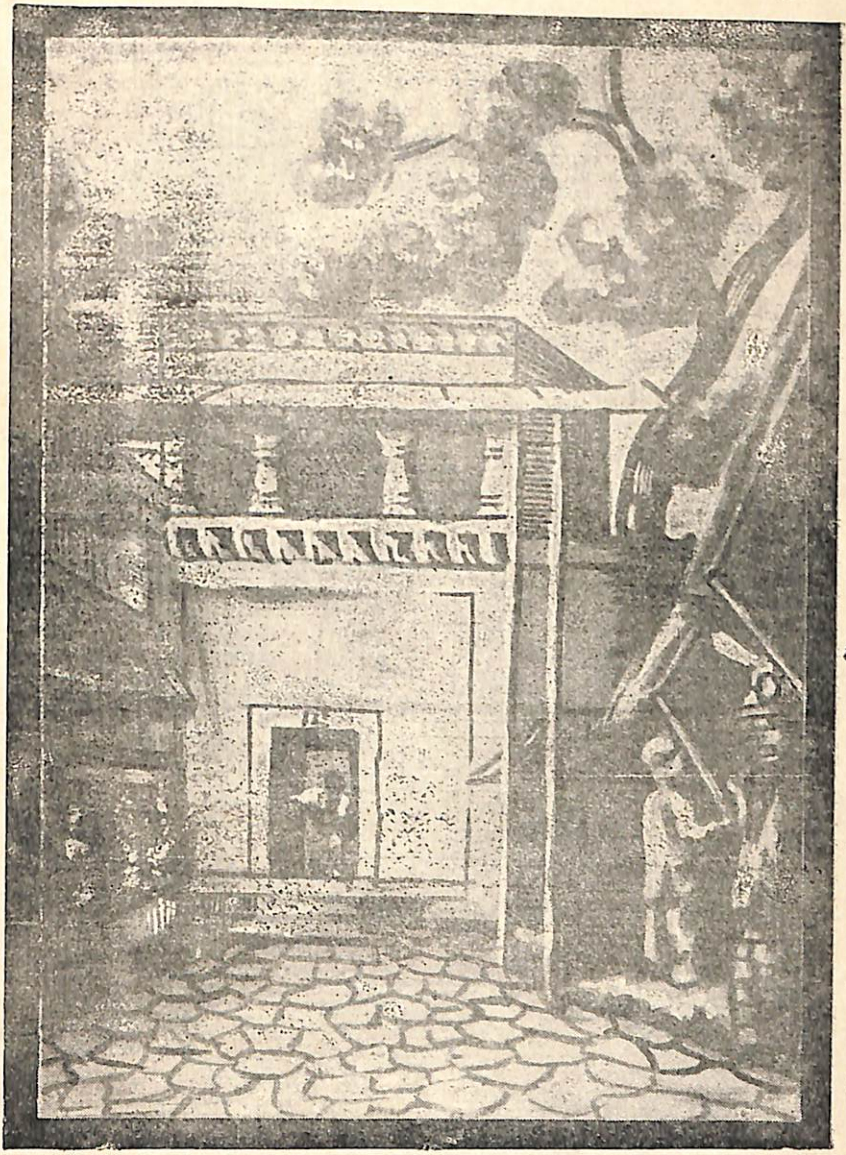
7. Mahalakshmi Temple, Kolhapur : Mouldings aud Walls

8. Shri Mahalakshmi, Kolhapur



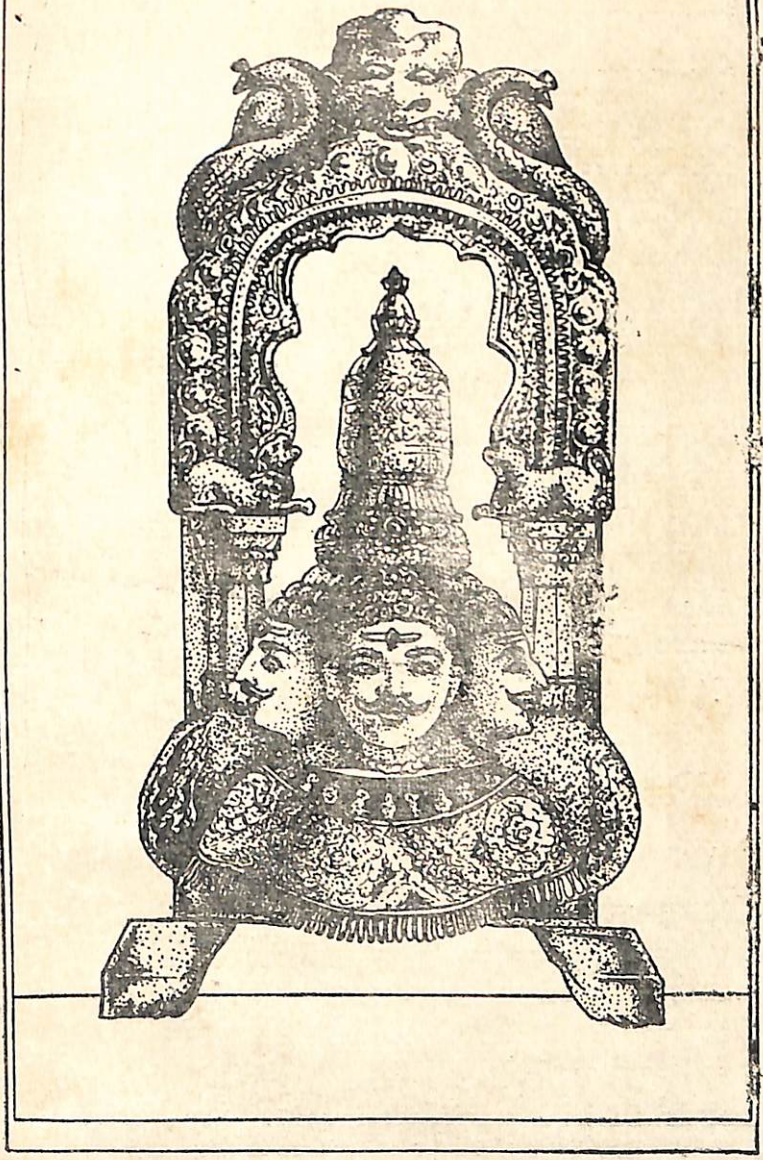
9. Shri Bhavani, Tuljapur

10. General view of the Temple, Tuljapur



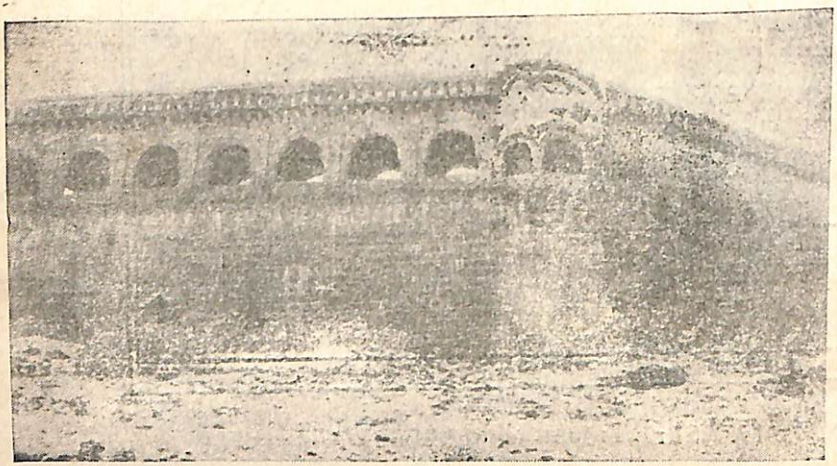
11. Entrance to the Temple, Ganagapur

12. Shri Parashurama Pedhe



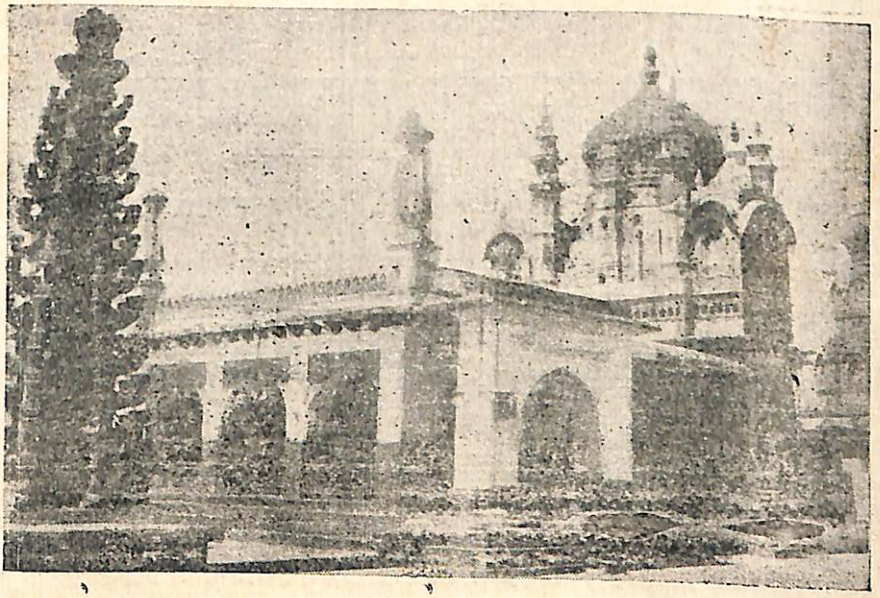
13. Shri Tryambakeshvar, Tryambak

14. Tryambakeshvar Temple, Tryambak: General View



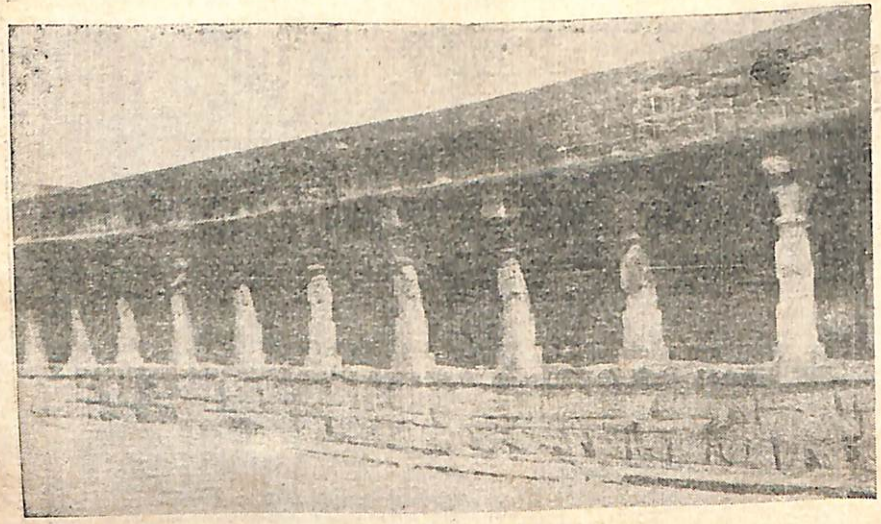
15. Fortifications and arcades around the Temple, Jejuri

16. Archways and Dipmalas on the Hill, Jejuri



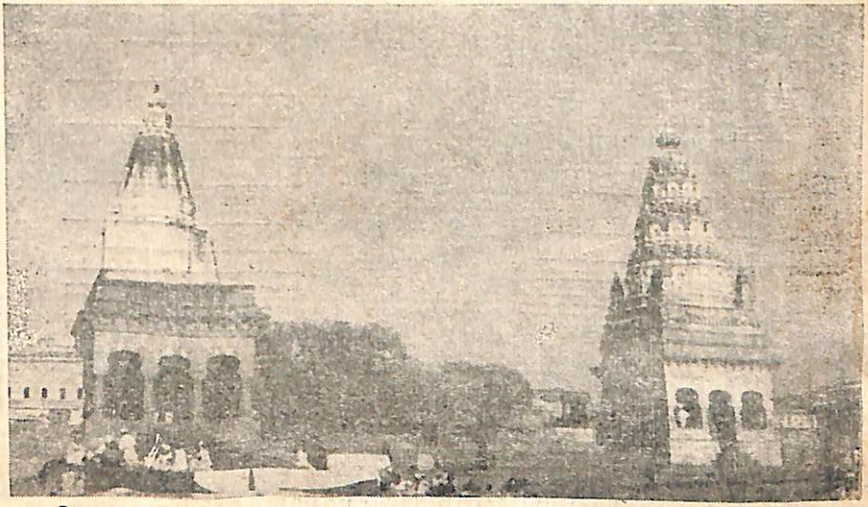
17. Khandoba Temple, Jejuri : General View

18. The Khandoba, Pali : Shikhar

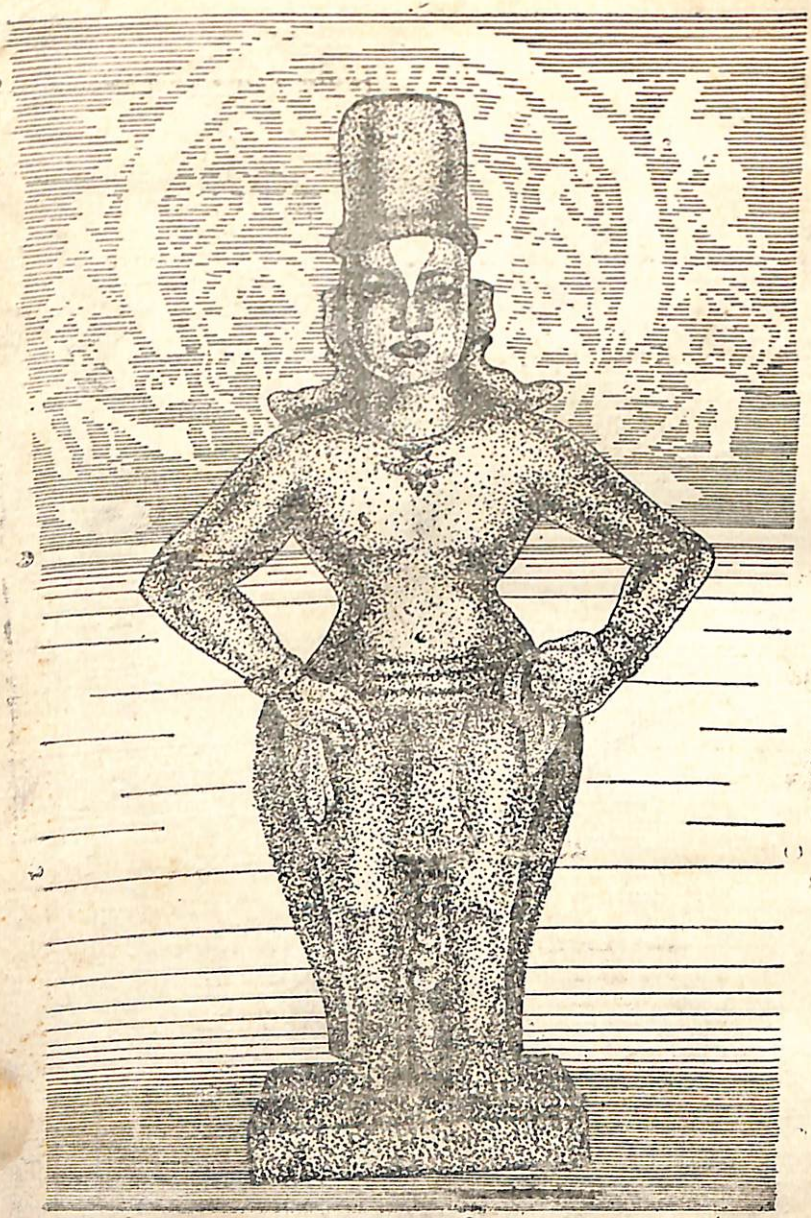


19. Pillared aisle around Khandoba Temple, Pali

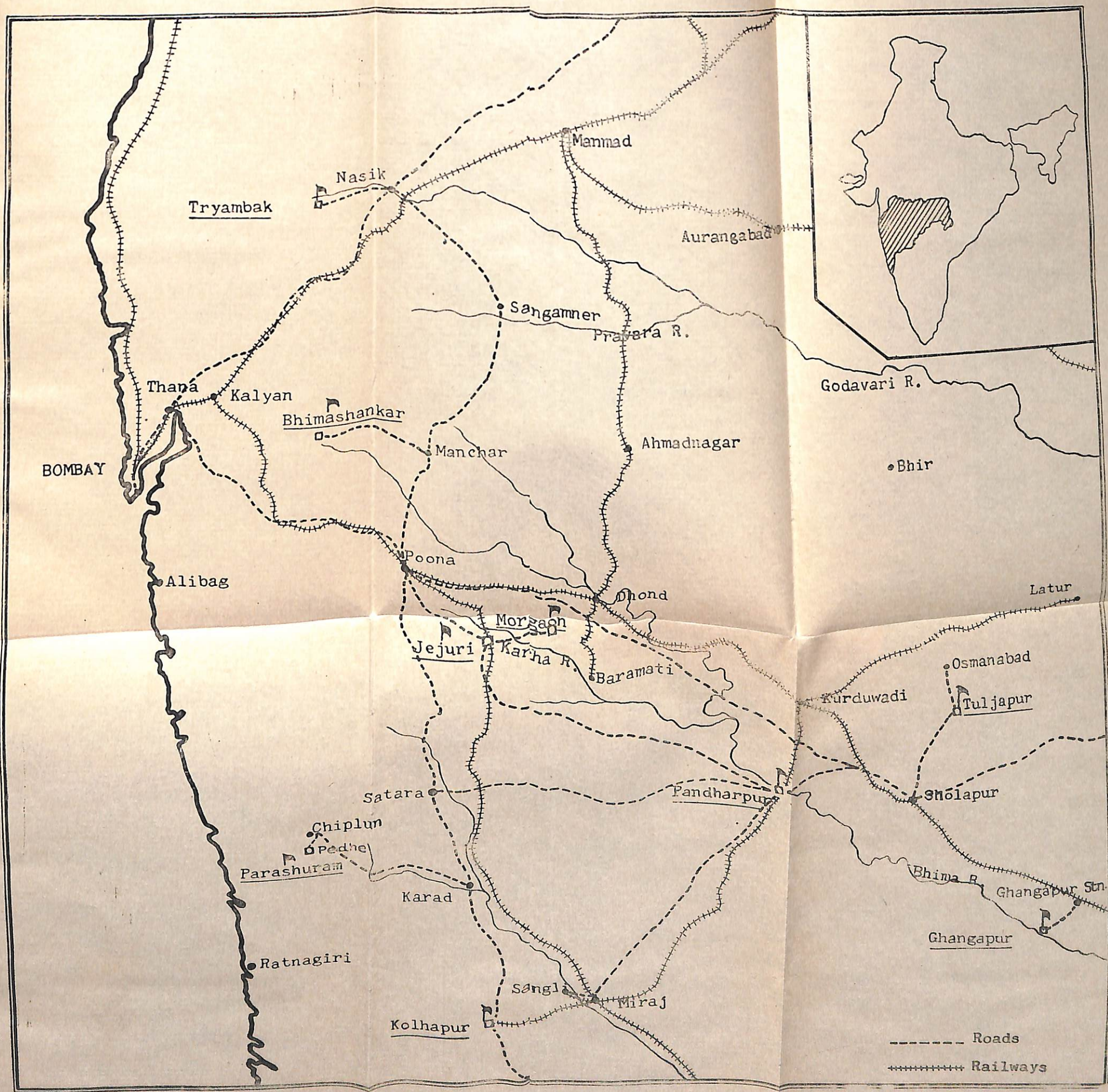
20. The Samadhi of Pundalik, Pandharpur



21. Temples on the banks of the Bhima, Pandharpur



22. Shri Vitthal, Pandharpur



Map showing various important Kshetrás of Maharashtra (Inset shows Political boundaries)

THE AUTHOR

Madhukar Shripad Mate (born 1930, in Poona), educated at the Sir Parashuram College and the University, Poona, took the Bachelor's and Master's degrees in History. As a Research Scholar of the Deccan College under Dr. H. D. Sankalia, he did valuable research into the Architecture of the Maratha period. He obtained his Ph.D. in 1957 and joined the Sir Parashuram College as a Lecturer in History. Later he moved to the Deccan College where he has been handling Ancient Indian History (Art and Architecture).

Shri Mate was always interested in architectural monuments and undertook a study of those built by the Muslim rulers in Deccan, the medieval period claiming his special attention. He was also an active participant in various archaeological explorations and excavations conducted by the Deccan College, chief amongst them being those at Nevasa and Ahar near Udaipur.

Shri Mate's thesis entitled 'Maratha Architecture', the first comprehensive and scientific study of the tectonic activities of the Marathas, has been published by the Poona University and the University Grants Commission. His other work, published by the Government of Maharashtra, is 'Antiquities of Nevasa', written in collaboration with Dr. Sankalia. He has also contributed many articles to Marathi journals on topics connected with Archaeology.

Archaeology is in Shri Mate's blood and, still in the prime of youth, the promise he gives of enriching the fund of knowledge in the subject, is indeed big.